

ALIENS™

VS.

PREDATOR™

OMNIBUS

VOLUME 2



ALIENSTM
vs.

PREDATORTM

OMNIBUS



A L  E N S TM

VS.

PREDATOR TM

OMNIBUS

VOLUME 2



DARK HORSE BOOKS®

CONTENTS

DEADLIEST OF THE SPECIES5

BOOTY305

HELL-BENT331

PURSUIT341

LEFTY’S REVENGE351

CHAINED TO LIFE AND DEATH361

XENOGENESIS.....369

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DEADLIEST OF THE SPECIES



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title illustration

JOHN BOLTON



TIME OF THE PREACHER

I'M RUNNING.

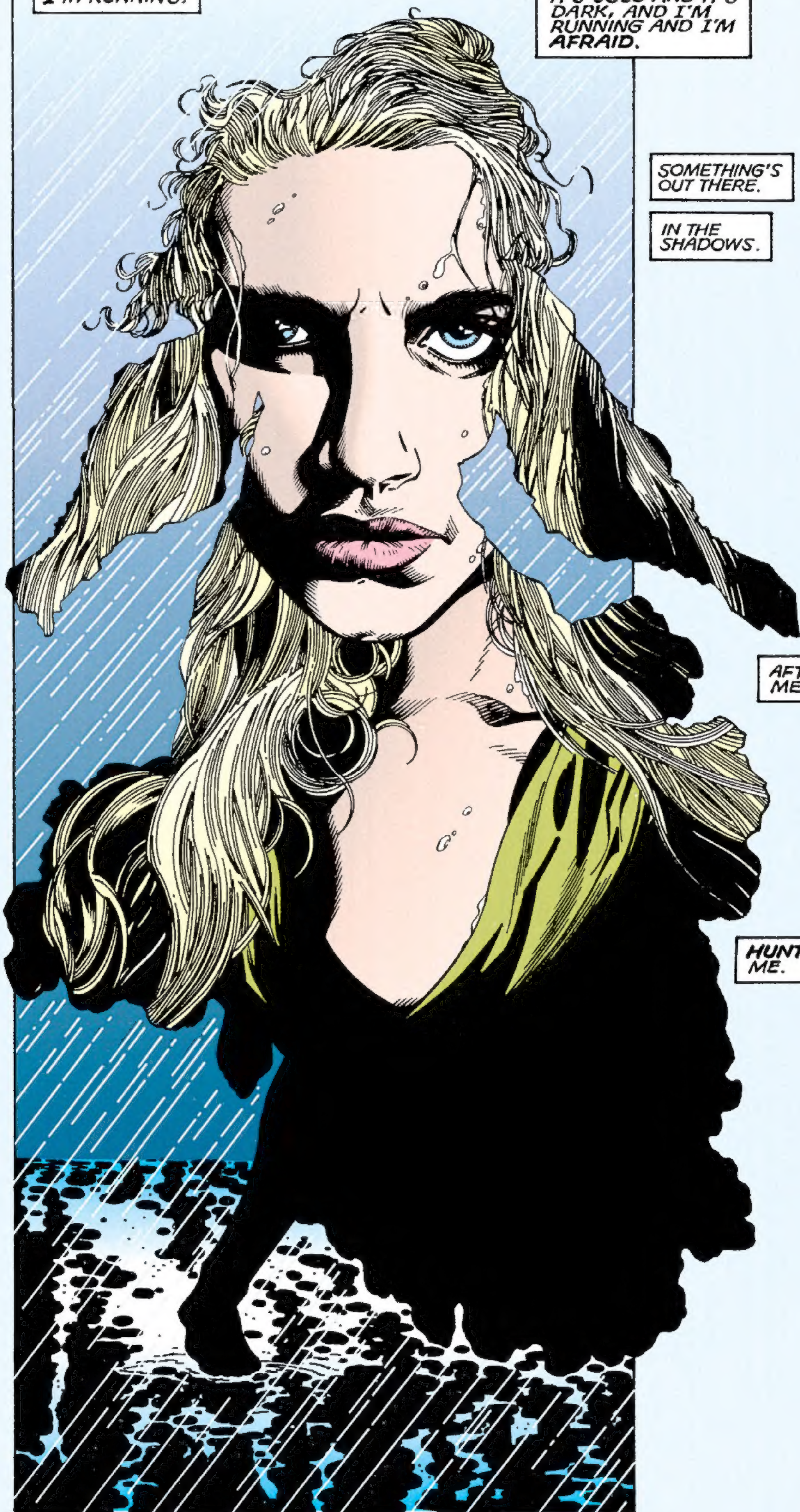
IT'S COLD AND IT'S
DARK, AND I'M
RUNNING AND I'M
AFRAID.

SOMETHING'S
OUT THERE.

IN THE
SHADOWS.

AFTER
ME.

HUNTING
ME.



THAT'S SILLY, I KNOW.

I'M CARYN DELACROIX.

MY HUSBAND IS LUCIEN DELACROIX, SENIOR PARTNER OF MONTCALM-DELACROIX et Cie. THIS SKYLINER IS HIS CORPORATE HOME AND HEADQUARTERS.

THE SKY IS SUPPOSED TO BE SAFE.

THAT'S WHY WE LIVE HERE.

I HEAR MUSIC, SEE LIGHTS FROM THE GRAND SALON--EVERYONE'S CELEBRATING THE ANNIVERSARY OF EARTH'S LIBERATION FROM THE ALIENS.

UPDATE : 23:15

LATEST REPORTS INDICATE INCREASED ACTIVITY. TOTAL DEAD FOR THE WEEK: 478. LANDSLIDE. TRAVEL IS RESTRICTED TO GREEN AREAS ONLY. PASSES MAY BE OBTAINED ONLY BY IMMEDIATE

THOSE MONSTERS AREN'T GONE YET, NOT ALTOGETHER.

HELP ME.

THROUGHOUT THE SHIP, PRINTED AND VIDEO INFOMATES WARN US HOW TO LOOK FOR ANY SIGN OF THEIR INFESTATION, OR FOR SOMEONE WHO MIGHT BE SERVING AS HOST TO AN ALIEN EMBRYO.

HELP ME!

AND OF COURSE THERE'S THE BODY COUNT, TO REMIND US OF WHAT WE'VE LOST.

ALL IN
AL DEAD
NDSIDE

DEAD

HELP ME!

DEAD

THIS WORLD USED TO TEEM WITH HUMAN LIFE--MORE PEOPLE, IT WAS SAID, THAN THE PLANET COULD SUPPORT IN HEALTH AND PROSPERITY.

NOT ANYMORE.

HELP ME!

THE ALIENS
KILLED BILLIONS.

BUT STILL
WE BEAT THEM.

COLD COMFORT.

I DON'T WANT TO BE NEXT.

CAN'T THEY
SEE ME IN THERE?
IS THE WINDOW TOO
THICK, IS THAT
WHY NO ONE
HEARS?

IT'S A WARM
RAIN, THE AIR
STEAMING.

NOT WHAT
YOU'D EXPECT,
AT THE ALTITUDE
WE FLY.

BUT EVERYTHING ELSE
ABOUT THE WORLD
AND OUR LIVES HAS
CHANGED, WHY NOT
THE WEATHER?

I LET THE
WATER WASH
OVER ME,
TELLING MYSELF
THERE'S NOTHING
TO FEAR, THIS
IS ALL IN MY
IMAGINATION.

NO PAIN,
NOT AT FIRST.

PROBABLY BE-
CAUSE MY MIND
REFUSES TO
COMPREHEND
THAT I'VE
BEEN HURT.

THEN
I TASTE
BLOOD.

YAH!!

I'VE NEVER
BEEN HIT
BEFORE.

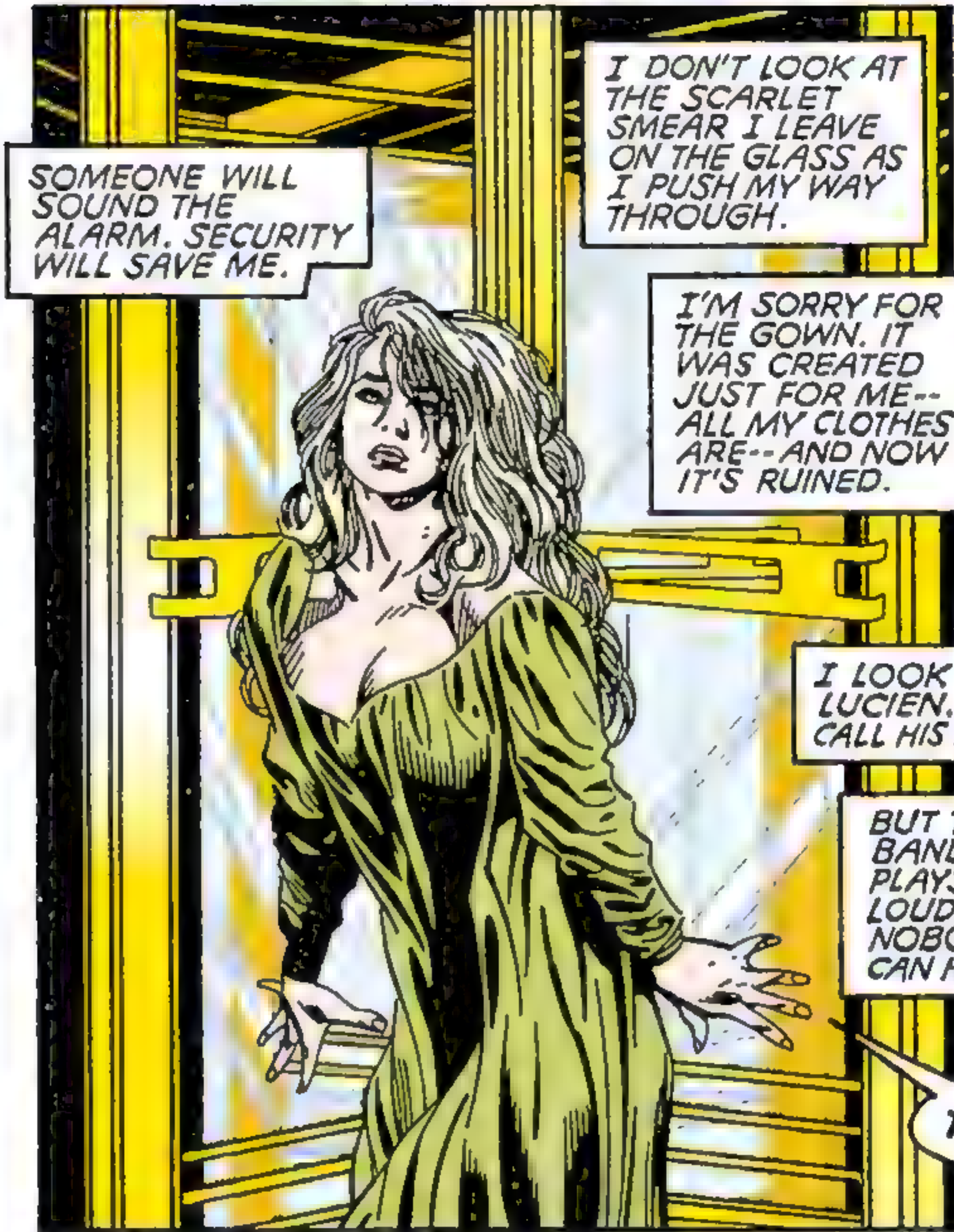
THE DOOR.

FIND
THE DOOR,
ANY DOOR!

BUT EVEN BE-
FORE I FULLY
REALIZE WHAT'S
HAPPENING...

...I'M HIT AGAIN.

GET
INSIDE!



SOMEONE WILL
SOUND THE
ALARM. SECURITY
WILL SAVE ME.

I DON'T LOOK AT
THE SCARLET
SMEAR I LEAVE
ON THE GLASS AS
I PUSH MY WAY
THROUGH.

I'M SORRY FOR
THE GOWN. IT
WAS CREATED
JUST FOR ME--
ALL MY CLOTHES
ARE-- AND NOW
IT'S RUINED.

I LOOK FOR
LUCIEN. I
CALL HIS NAME.

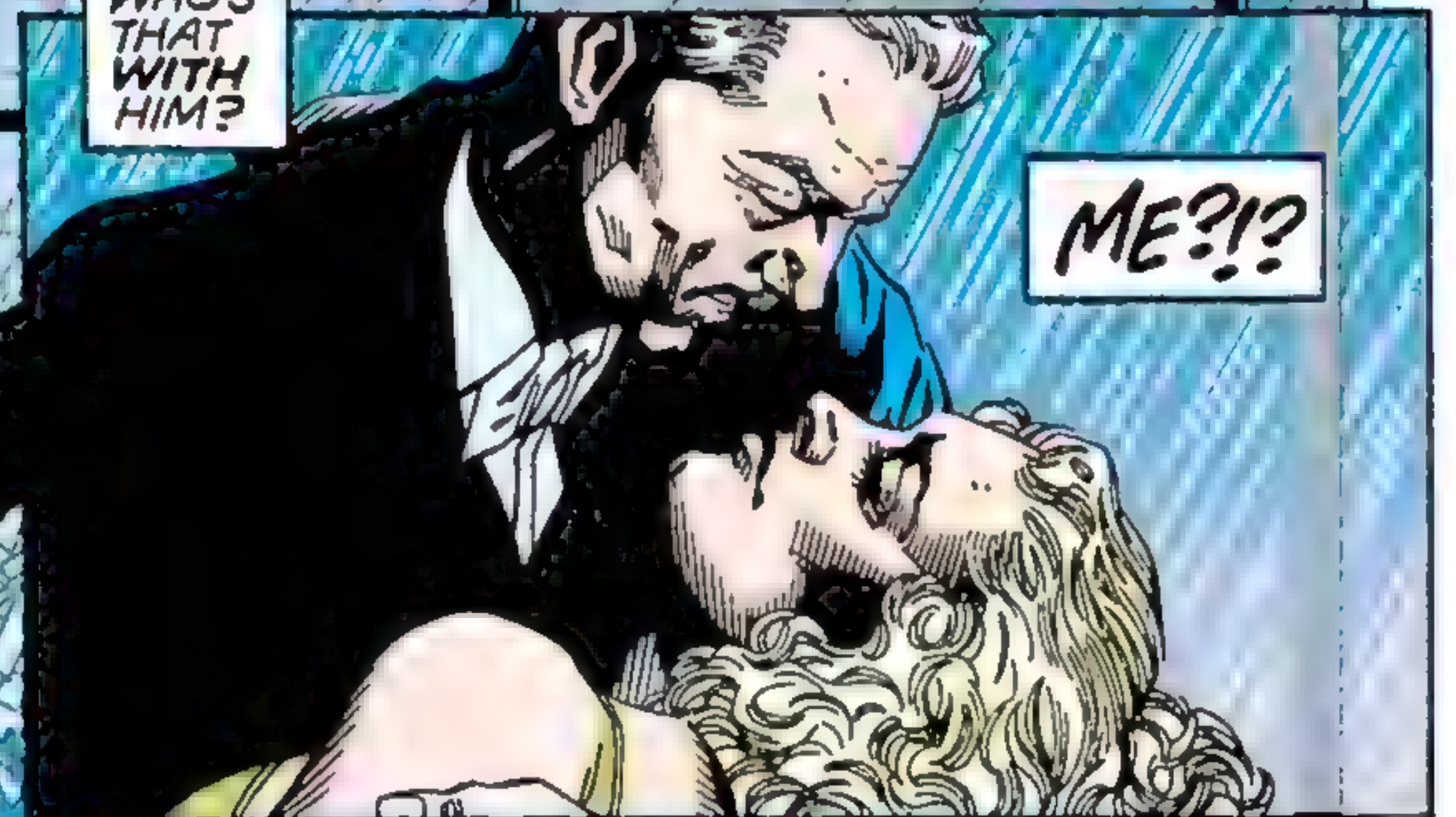
BUT THE
BAND
PLAYS TOO
LOUDLY,
NOBODY
CAN HEAR.

THERE!



BUT
WHO'S
THAT
WITH
HIM?

ME?!?



SKRASH!

THE
CREATURE--
IT'S
FOLLOWED
ME!

LUCIEN--
YOUR
HEAD!?!

POIT!





FOR A MOMENT, I JUST STAND STILL AMIDST THE CHAOS, STARING IN DUMB DISBELIEF, OBLIVIOUS OF THE FLASHFIRE OF TERROR THAT RAGES ABOUT ME.

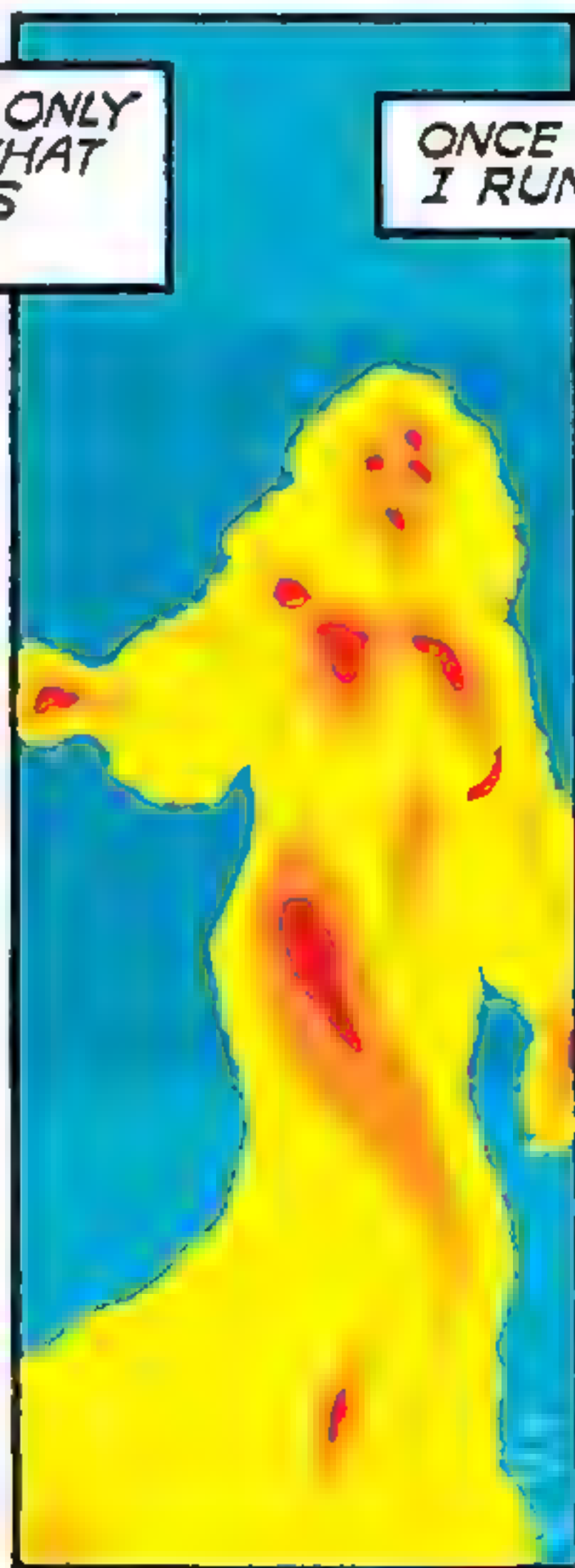
I HEAR SCREAMS, AS THOUGH FROM A GREAT DISTANCE, AND THE SOUNDS OF A TERRIBLE SLAUGHTER.



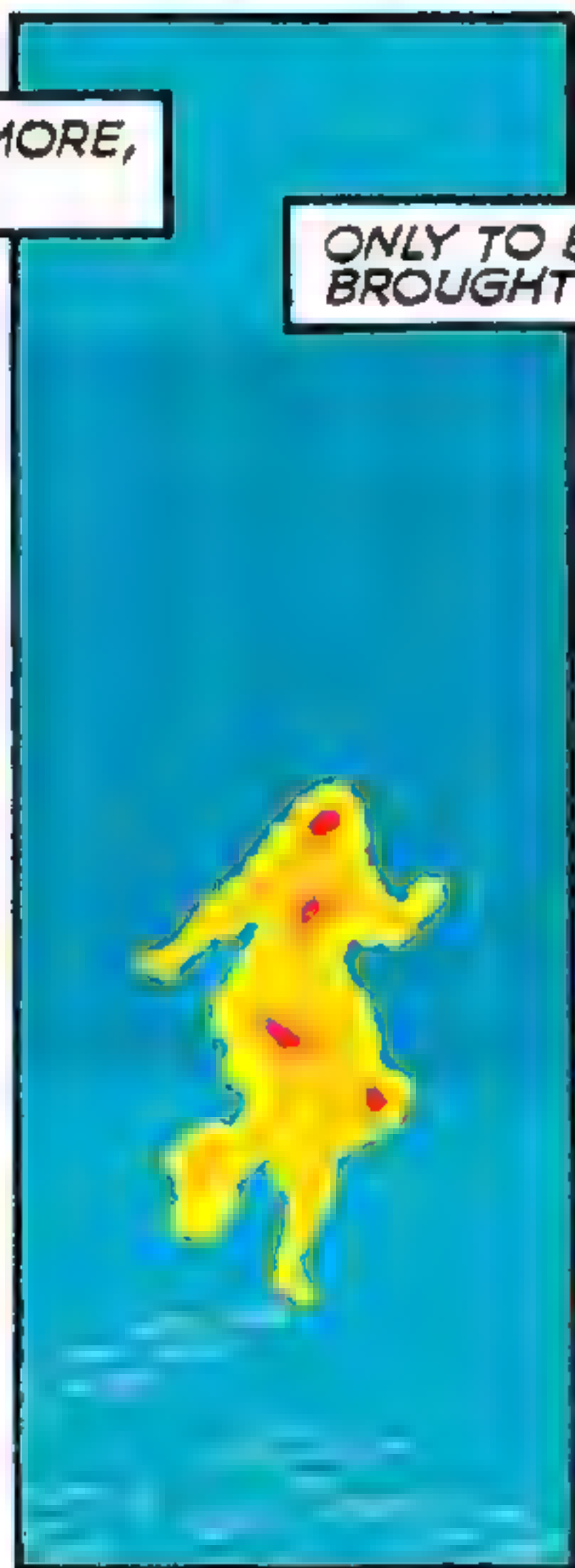
BUT NOTHING I SEE IS REAL.



AND THE ONLY BLOOD THAT FLOWS IS MINE.



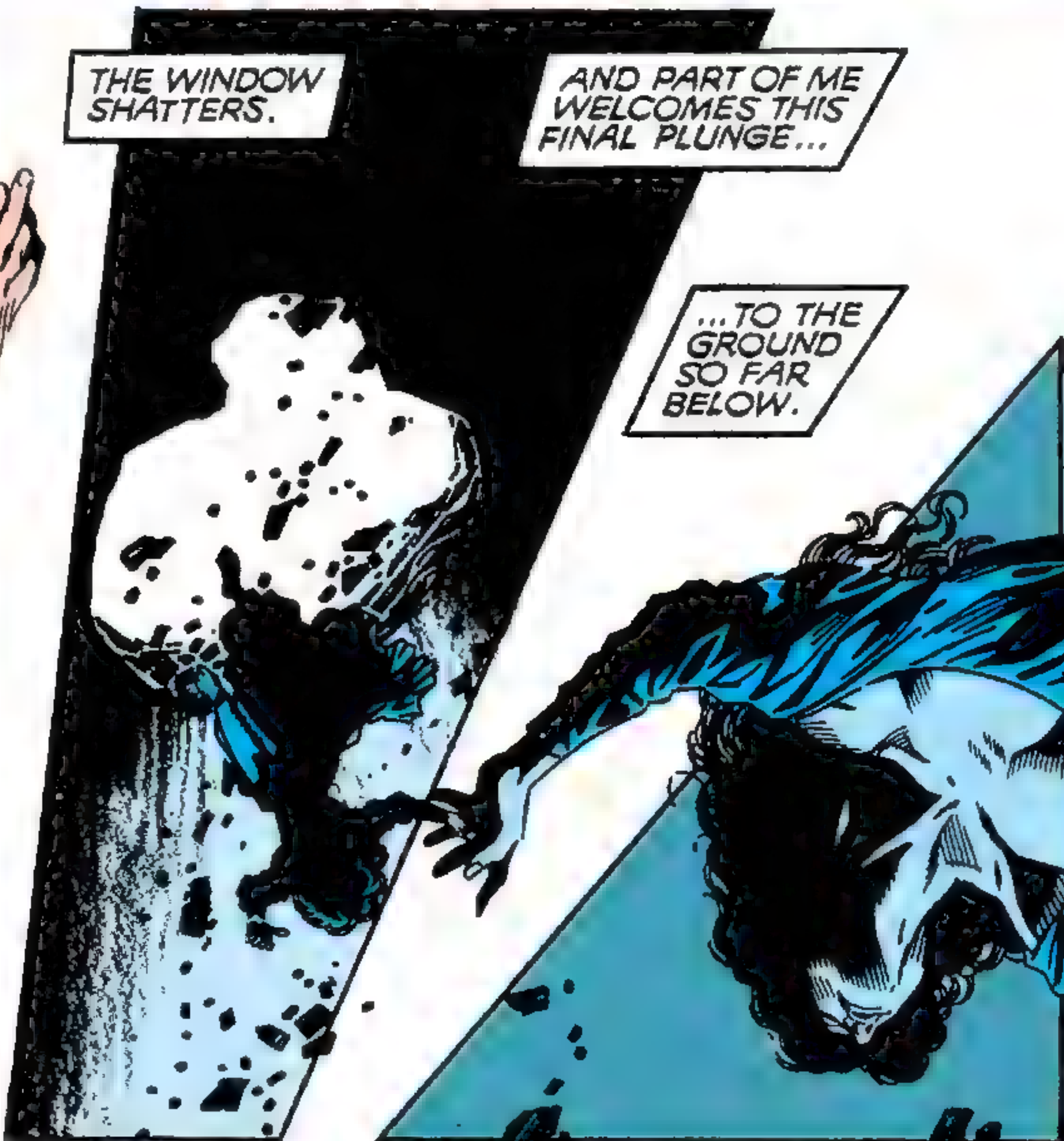
ONCE MORE, I RUN.



ONLY TO BE BROUGHT DOWN...



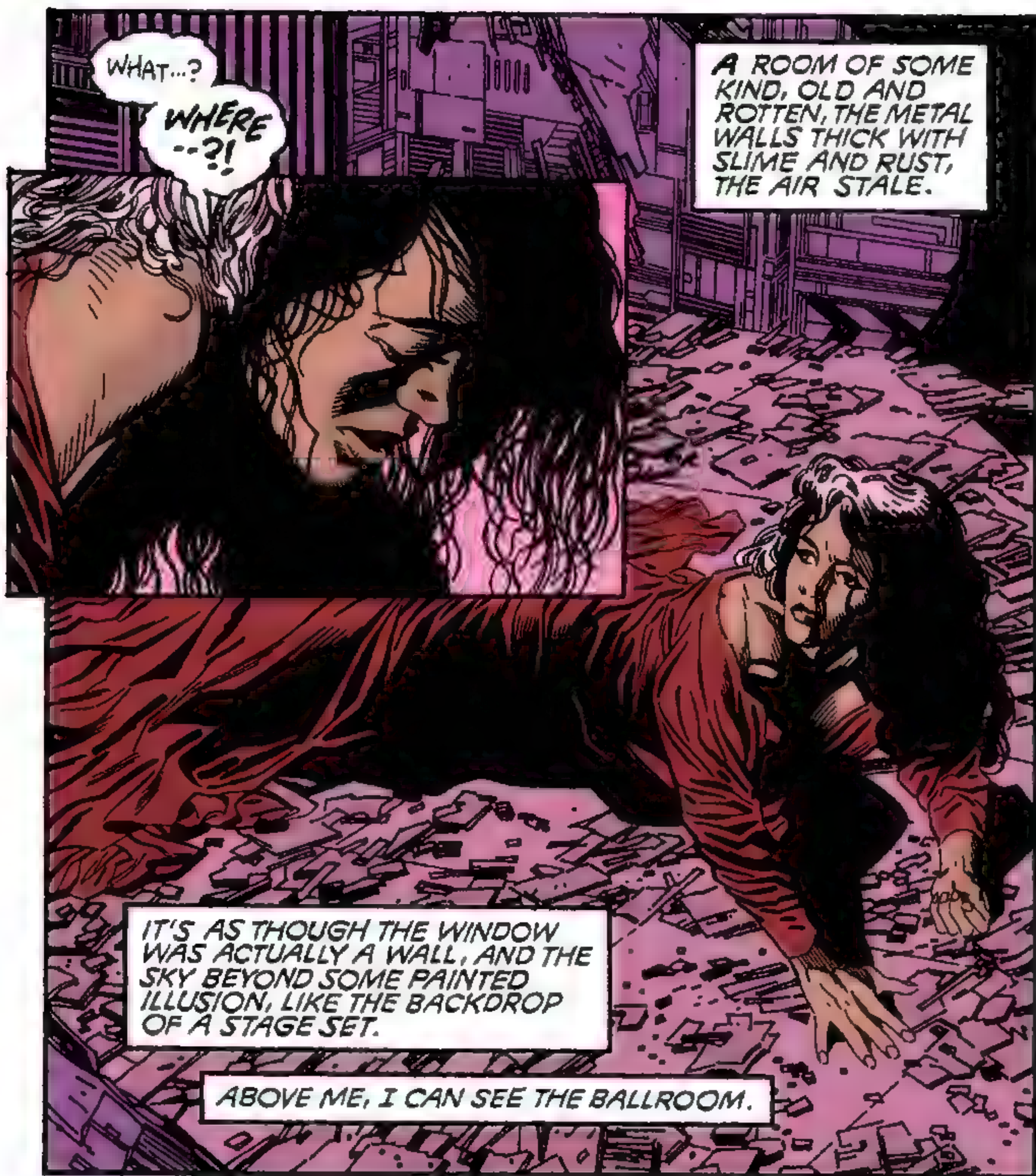
... BY THE MANNEQUIN VERSION OF ME.



THE WINDOW SHATTERS.

AND PART OF ME WELCOMES THIS FINAL PLUNGE...

...TO THE GROUND SO FAR BELOW.



WHAT...?

WHERE
--?!

A ROOM OF SOME
KIND, OLD AND
ROTTEN, THE METAL
WALLS THICK WITH
SLIME AND RUST,
THE AIR STALE.

IT'S AS THOUGH THE WINDOW
WAS ACTUALLY A WALL, AND THE
SKY BEYOND SOME PAINTED
ILLUSION, LIKE THE BACKDROP
OF A STAGE SET.

ABOVE ME, I CAN SEE THE BALLROOM.



WHOEVER--
WHATEVER--
MY PURSUER IS,
I KNOW NOW IT
WON'T STOP
UNTIL ONE OF
US IS SLAIN.



I HAVE
TO HIDE.

OH!?!



I
TRIPPED!

OVER
MY OWN
FEET?!



MADNESS
UPON
MADNESS.

I START
TO WAIL.

IT'S LIKE THE TALES
OF CLASSICAL HELL.

EACH CIRCLE OF
TORMENT GIVES
WAY TO ONE
IMMEASURABLY
WORSE.



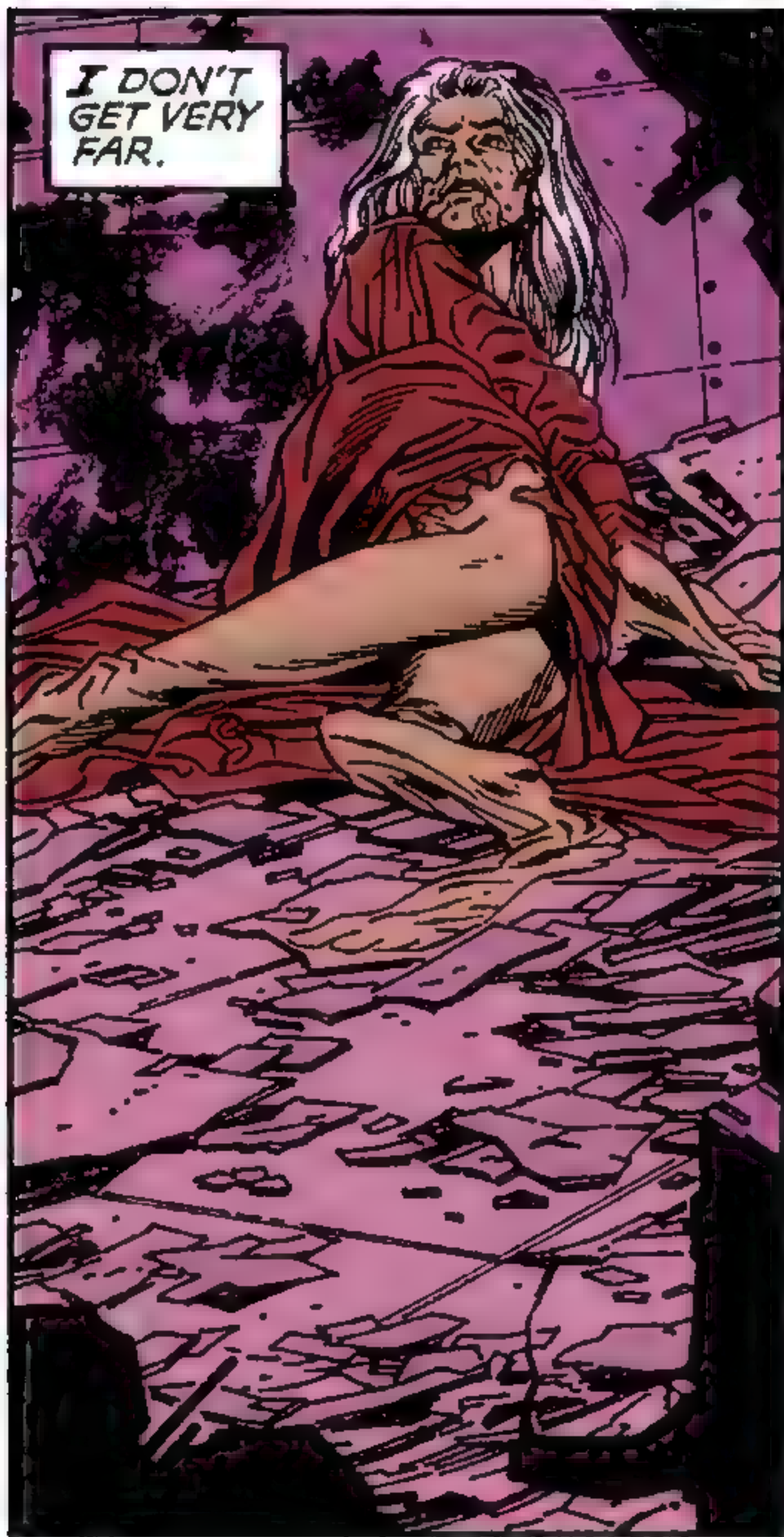
I CAN'T
ENDURE
ANY MORE.

I WANT TO GIVE UP.



BUT SOMETHING
INSIDE WON'T
LET ME.





I DON'T
GET VERY
FAR.



IT ISN'T JUST MY
FEET, WHERE THE
SKIN HAS STRETCHED
LIKE A SET OF
CLOTHES THAT'S
SUDDENLY TWO
SIZES TOO BIG...



...BUT MY
HANDS
AS WELL!

THE
FLESH
TEARS
EASILY.



I CAN'T HELP
MYSELF...



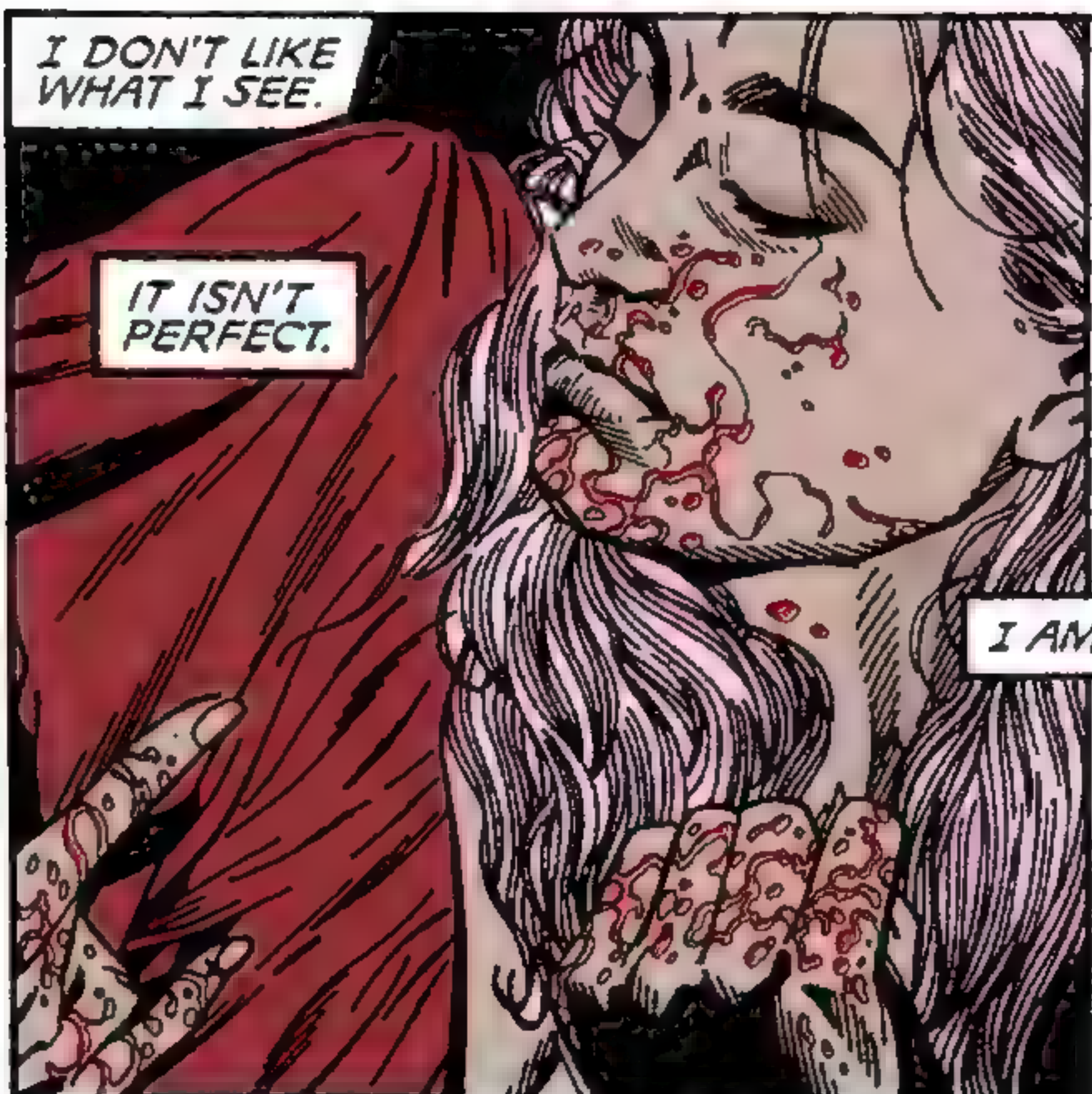
...AS I PEEL
MY OLD SELF
AWAY...



...LIKE REMOVING
A PAIR OF GLOVES,
OR STOCKINGS.



TO FIND THERE'S
A WHOLE
DIFFERENT
BODY UNDER-
NEATH.



I DON'T LIKE
WHAT I SEE.

IT ISN'T
PERFECT.

I AM.

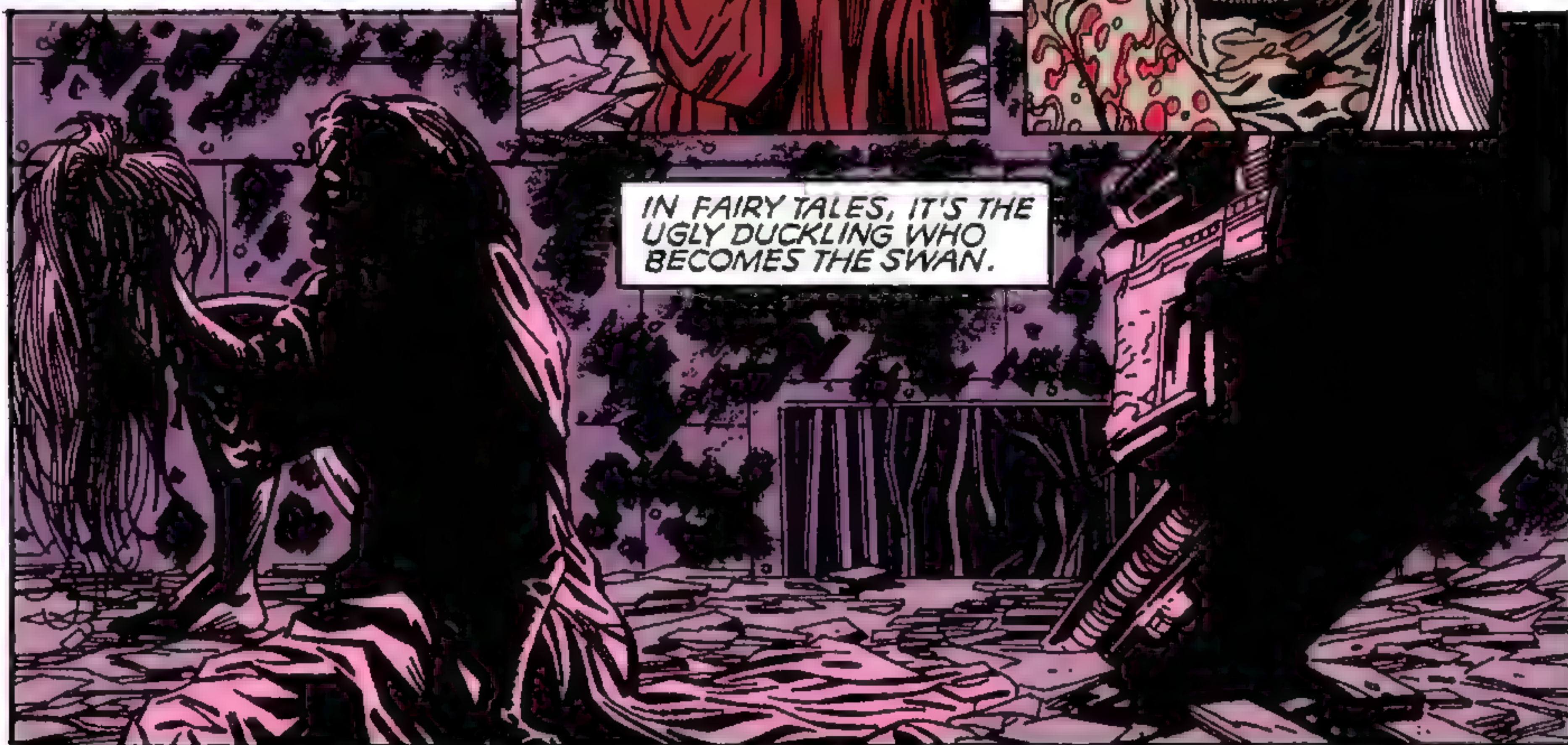


I PUT MY HANDS TO MY
FACE, PRAYING THAT WILL
STAY THE SAME AND
LEAVE ME WHO I AM.



I DON'T
SCREAM.

I CAN'T.
I'M TOO FAR
BEYOND
THAT. BE-
YOND ANY
FEELING
WHATSO-
EVER. NUMB,
WITHIN AND
WITHOUT.



IN FAIRY TALES, IT'S THE
UGLY DUCKLING WHO
BECOMES THE SWAN.



I'VE DONE
THE REVERSE.

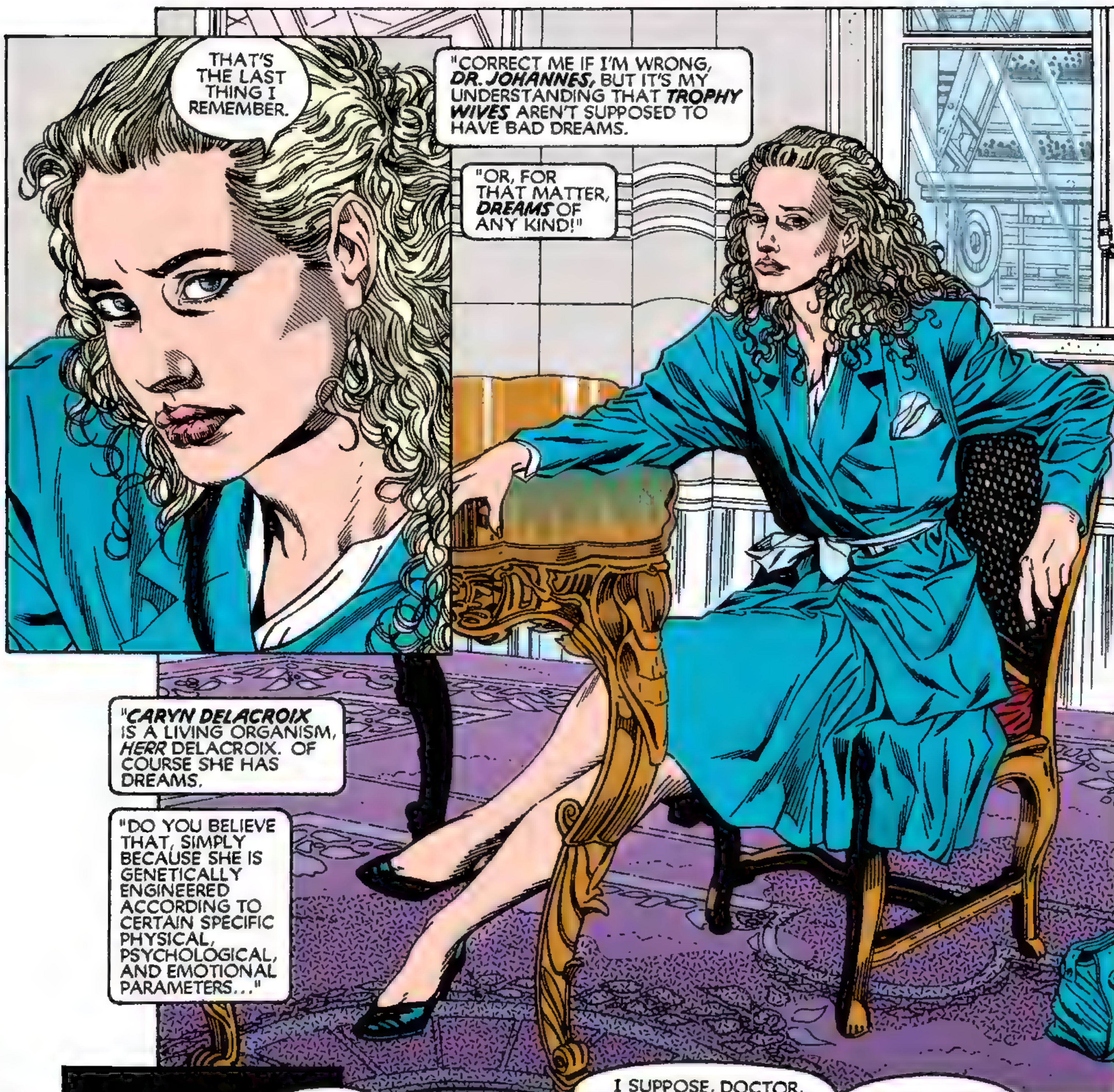
I DON'T KNOW WHAT
IS HAPPENING, OR
WHY. I ONLY HOPE
IT'LL END. SOON.



THIS TIME, I
GET MY WISH.

ASH...
PAR...
NALL!





THAT'S
THE LAST
THING I
REMEMBER.

"CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG,
DR. JOHANNES, BUT IT'S MY
UNDERSTANDING THAT **TROPHY**
WIVES AREN'T SUPPOSED TO
HAVE BAD DREAMS.

"OR, FOR
THAT MATTER,
DREAMS OF
ANY KIND!"

"**CARYN DELACROIX**
IS A LIVING ORGANISM,
HERR DELACROIX. OF
COURSE SHE HAS
DREAMS.

"DO YOU BELIEVE
THAT, SIMPLY
BECAUSE SHE IS
GENETICALLY
ENGINEERED
ACCORDING TO
CERTAIN SPECIFIC
PHYSICAL,
PSYCHOLOGICAL,
AND EMOTIONAL
PARAMETERS..."



...SHE IS
LESS OF A
HUMAN
BEING THAN
YOU OR ME?

I SUPPOSE, DOCTOR,
THAT DEPENDS ON YOUR
POINT OF VIEW.

WHATEVER CARYN
IS-- IN A MORAL OR
EXISTENTIAL SENSE--
HER **SERVICES** ARE
GUARANTEED BY
CONTRACT.

AND NOWHERE IN
THAT DOCUMENT IS THERE
ANY MENTION THAT **TROPHY**
CONSORTS-- ESPECIALLY
TROPHY WIVES--MIGHT
POSSIBLY SUFFER FROM
NEUROSES. OR WORSE. QUITE
THE OPPOSITE, IN FACT.

MONTCALM-
DELACROIX et Cie
CANNOT AFFORD TO HAVE
AN UNSTABLE CONSORT
FOR ONE OF ITS PREMIER
EXECUTIVES.

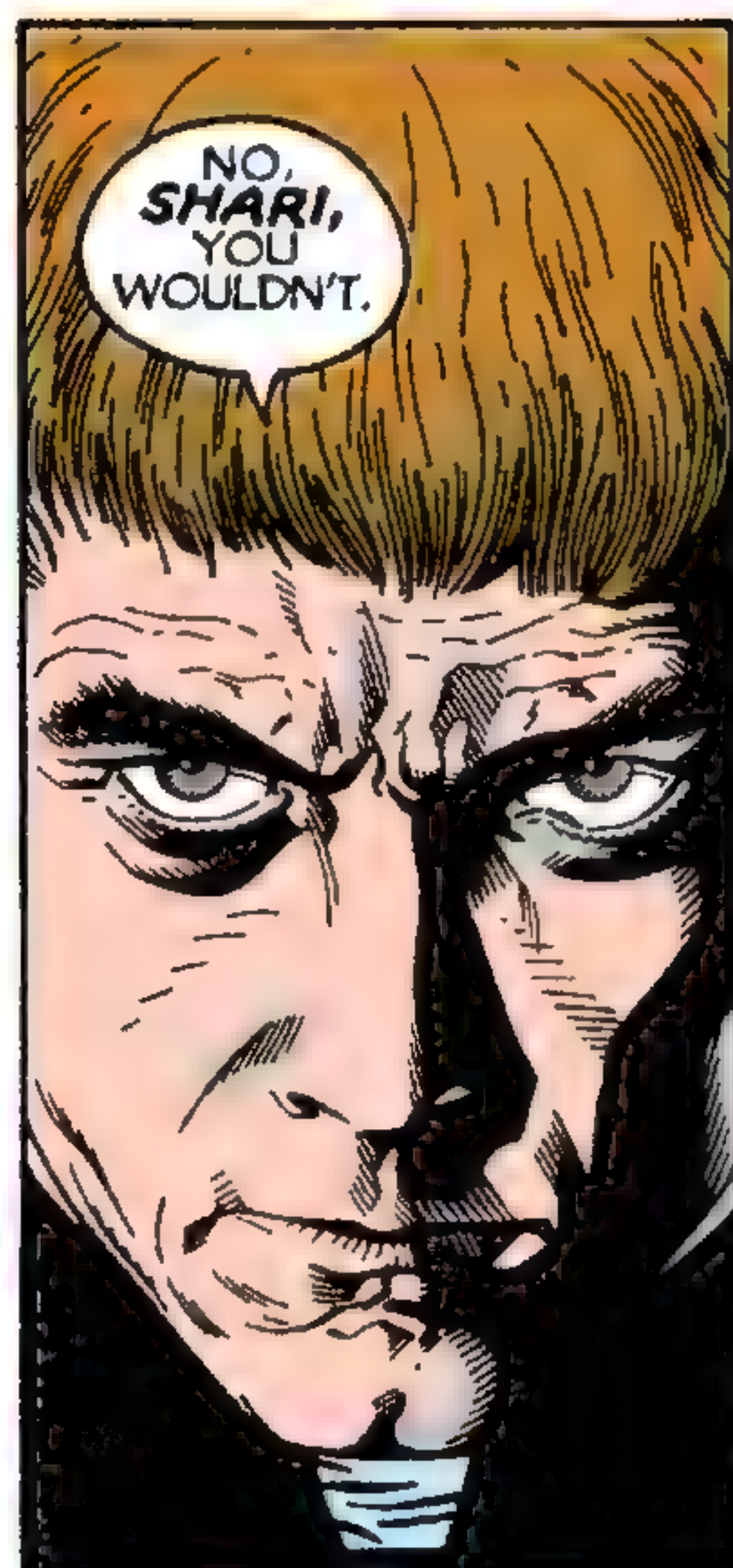
IS THAT FOR
YOU TO DECIDE,
WILLEM?



AS LUCIEN DELACROIX'S SON AND HEIR, I AM OBLIGED TO LOOK AFTER HIS BEST INTERESTS, AND THE FIRM'S.



I DON'T SEE WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT HER.



NO, SHARI, YOU WOULDN'T.



I'M **BETTER** THAN HER, WILLEM. I'M PERFECT AND I'M **YOUNG**. THAT'LL NEVER CHANGE.

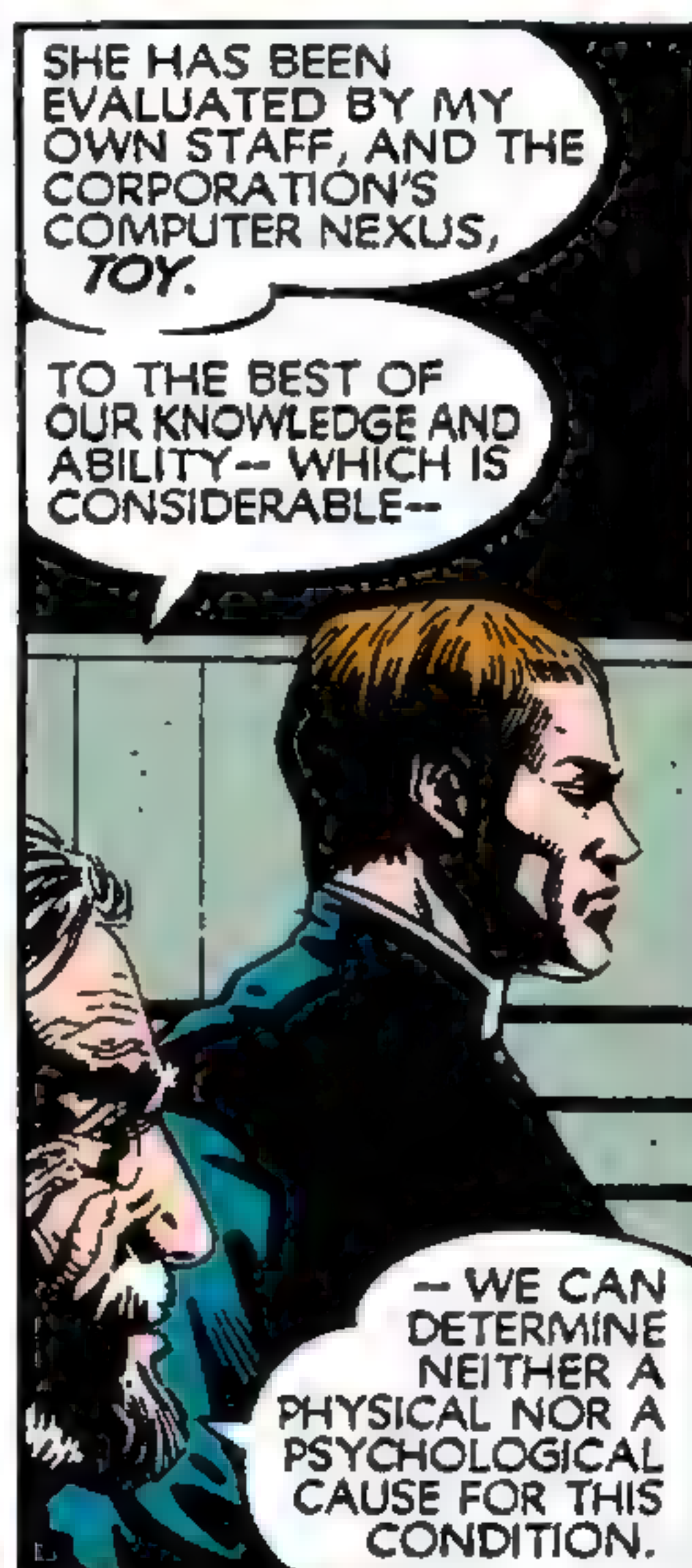
I'M **YOURS** FOREVER-- WHY CAN'T THAT BE ENOUGH?

IS THERE A CAUSE, DOCTOR?



CARYN'S BENCHMARK TESTS INDICATE AN EXCEPTIONALLY **STABLE** PERSONALITY.

HER LIFE HISTORY BEARS THAT OUT.



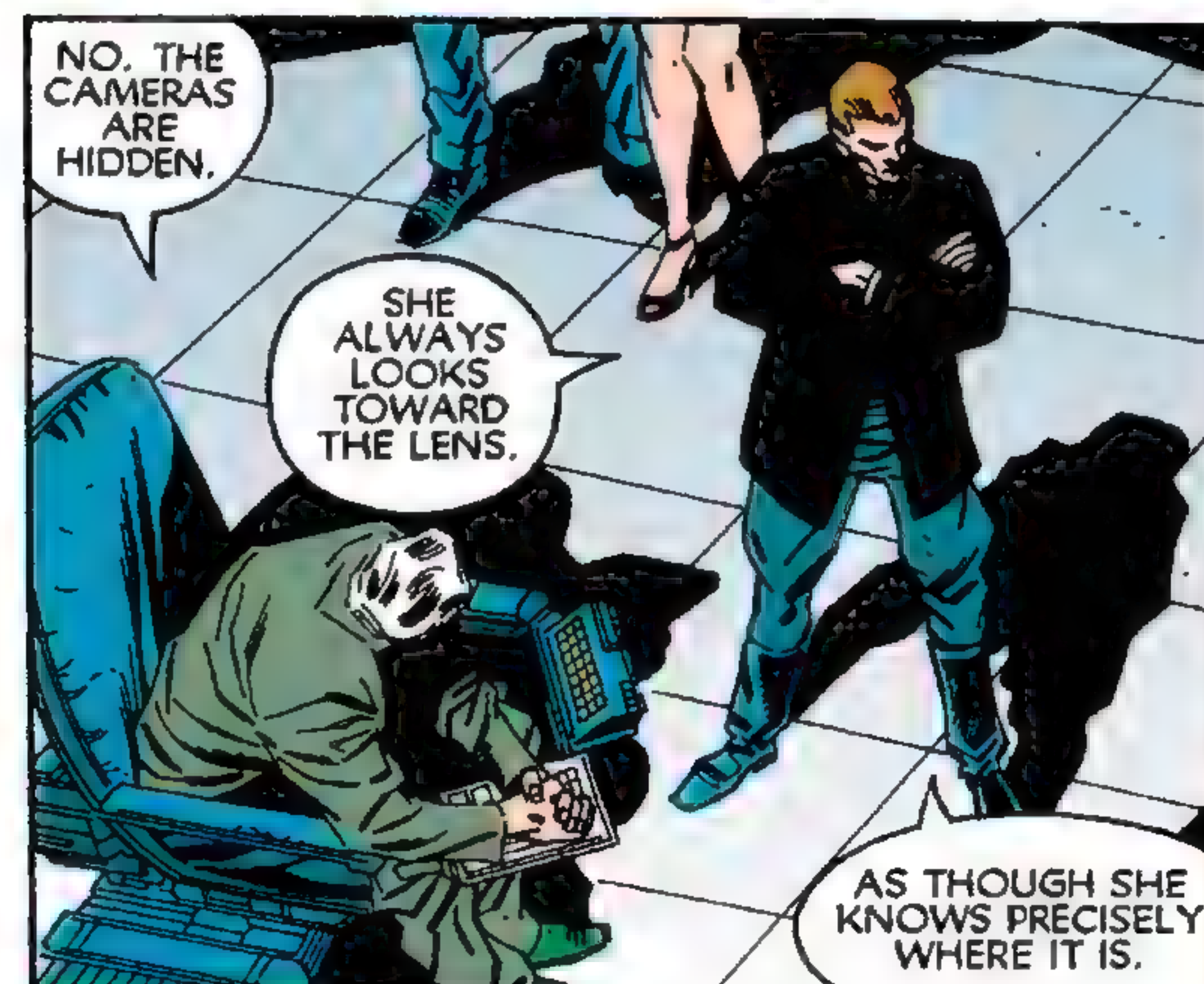
SHE HAS BEEN EVALUATED BY MY OWN STAFF, AND THE CORPORATION'S COMPUTER NEXUS, **TOY**.

TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITY-- WHICH IS CONSIDERABLE--

-- WE CAN DETERMINE NEITHER A PHYSICAL NOR A PSYCHOLOGICAL CAUSE FOR THIS CONDITION.



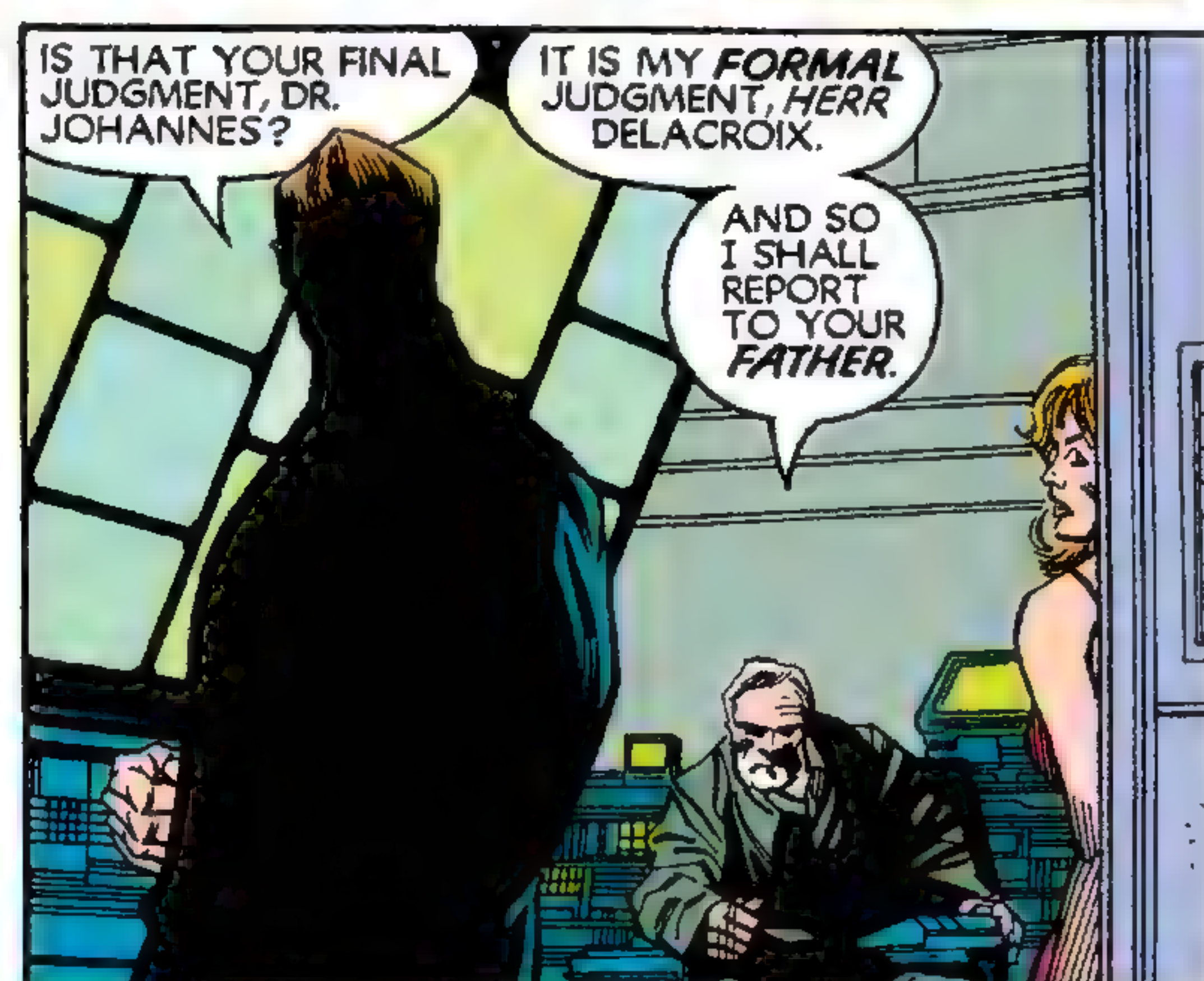
CAN SHE SEE US?



NO. THE CAMERAS ARE HIDDEN.

SHE ALWAYS LOOKS TOWARD THE LENS.

AS THOUGH SHE KNOWS PRECISELY WHERE IT IS.

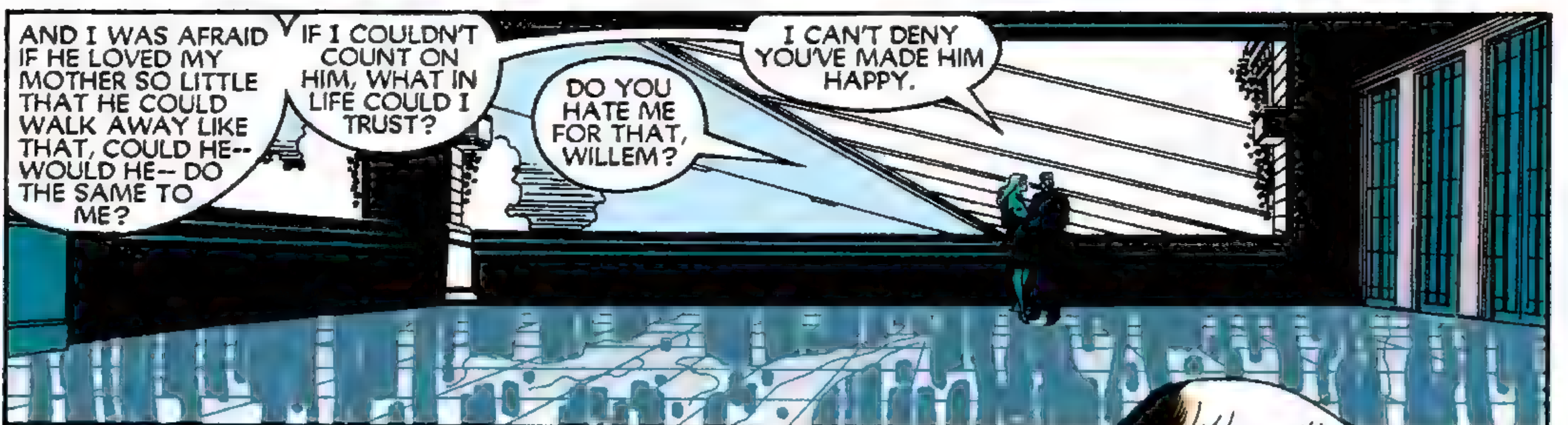
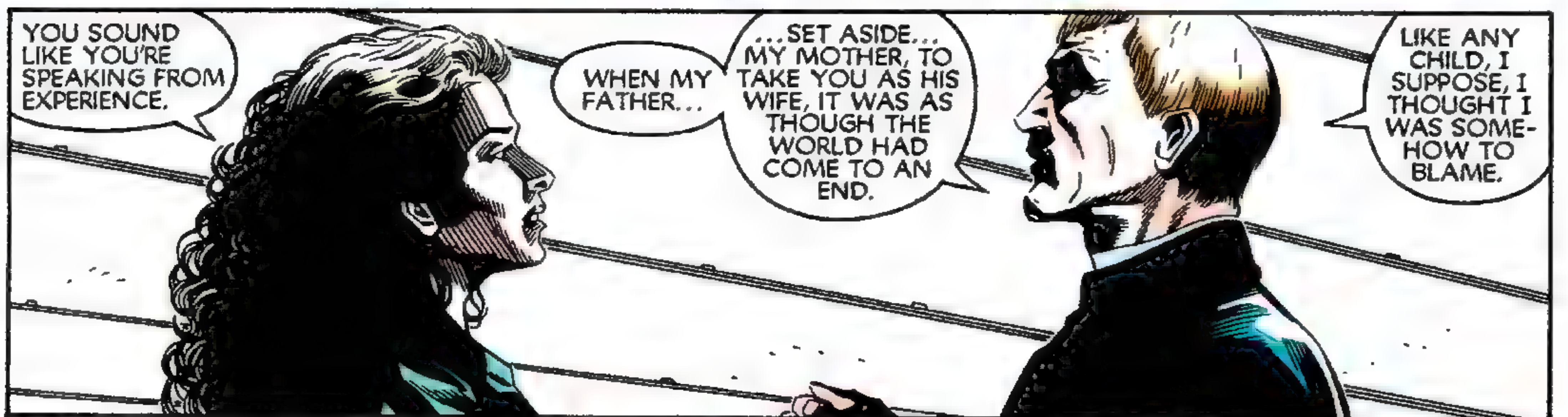
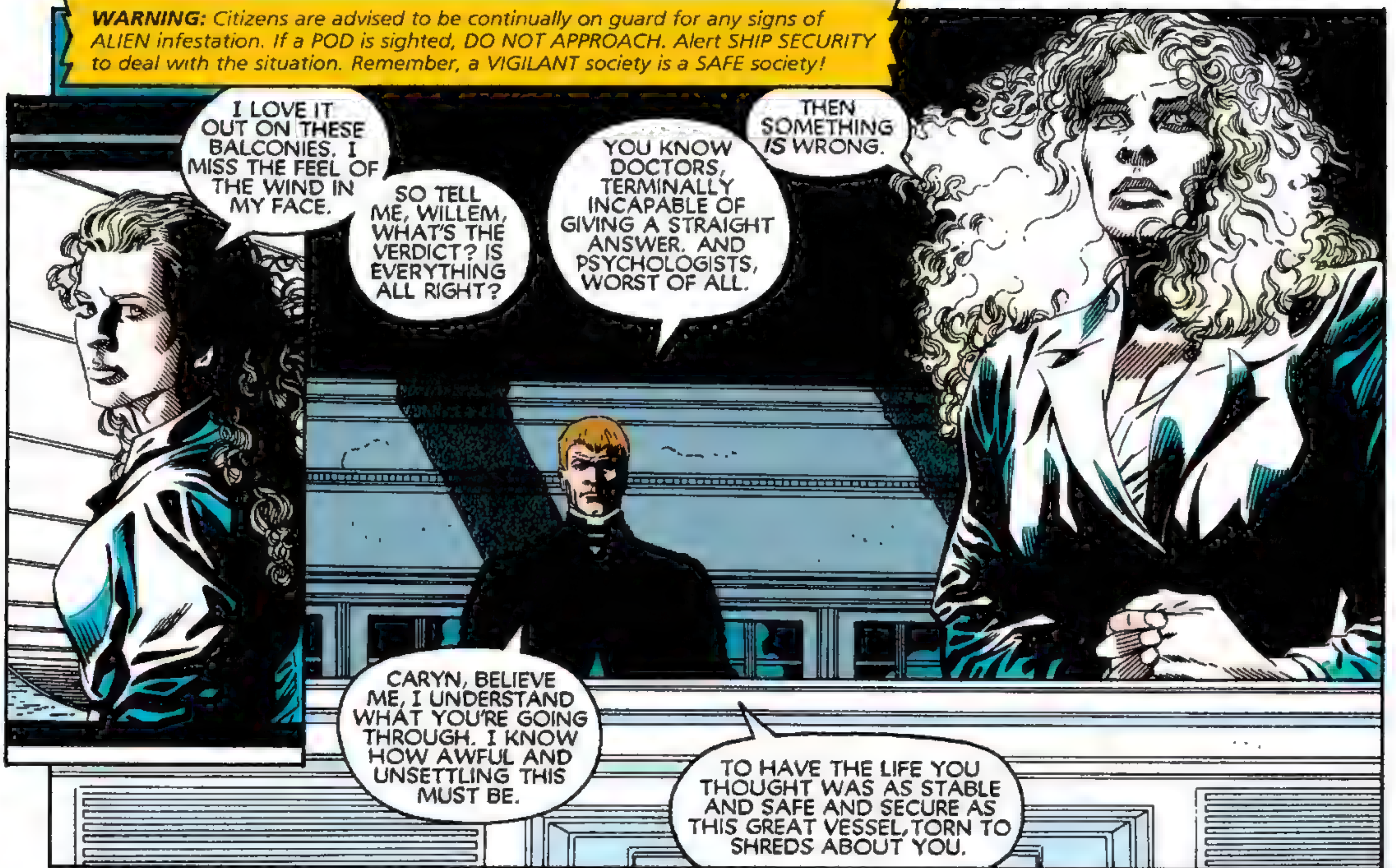


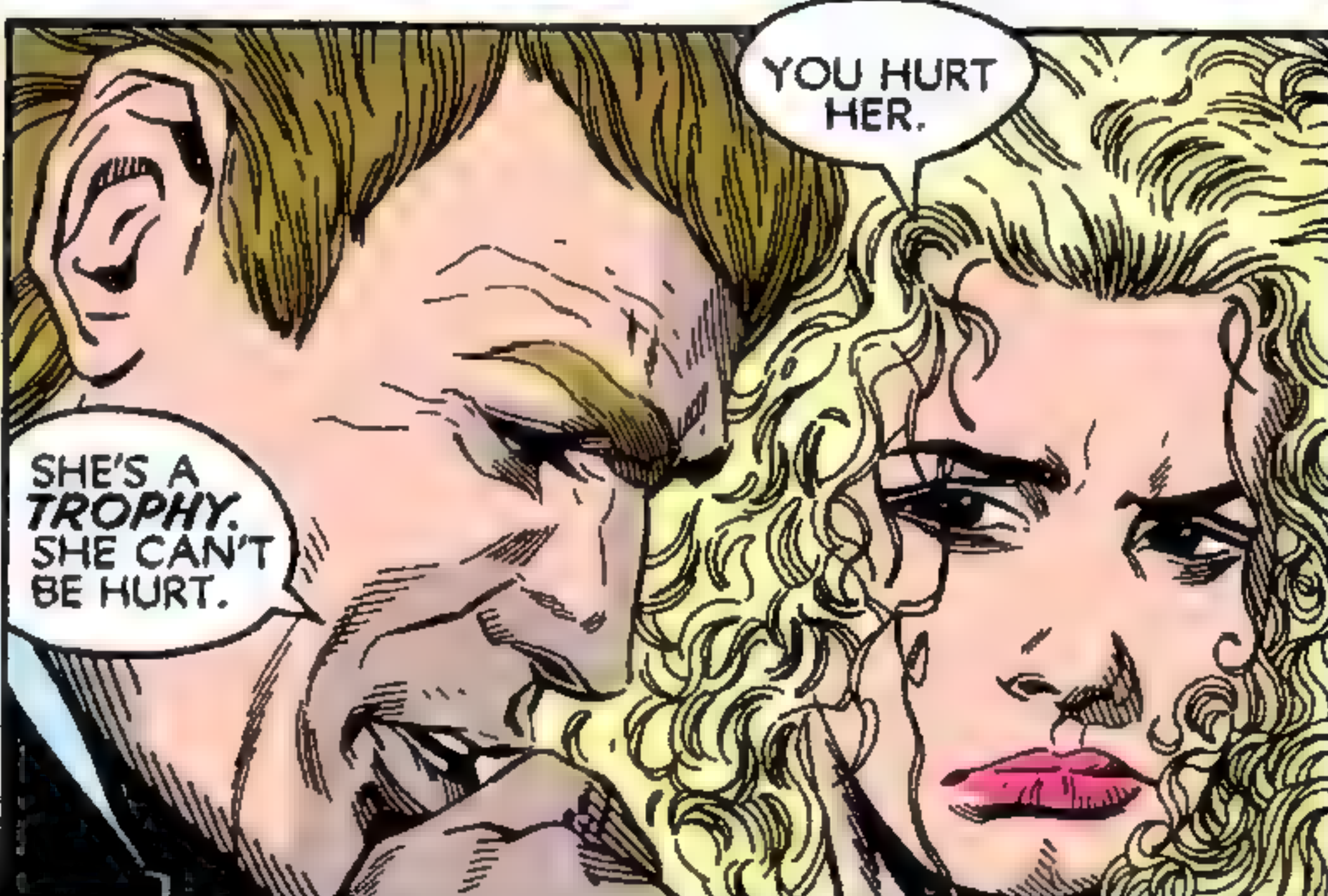
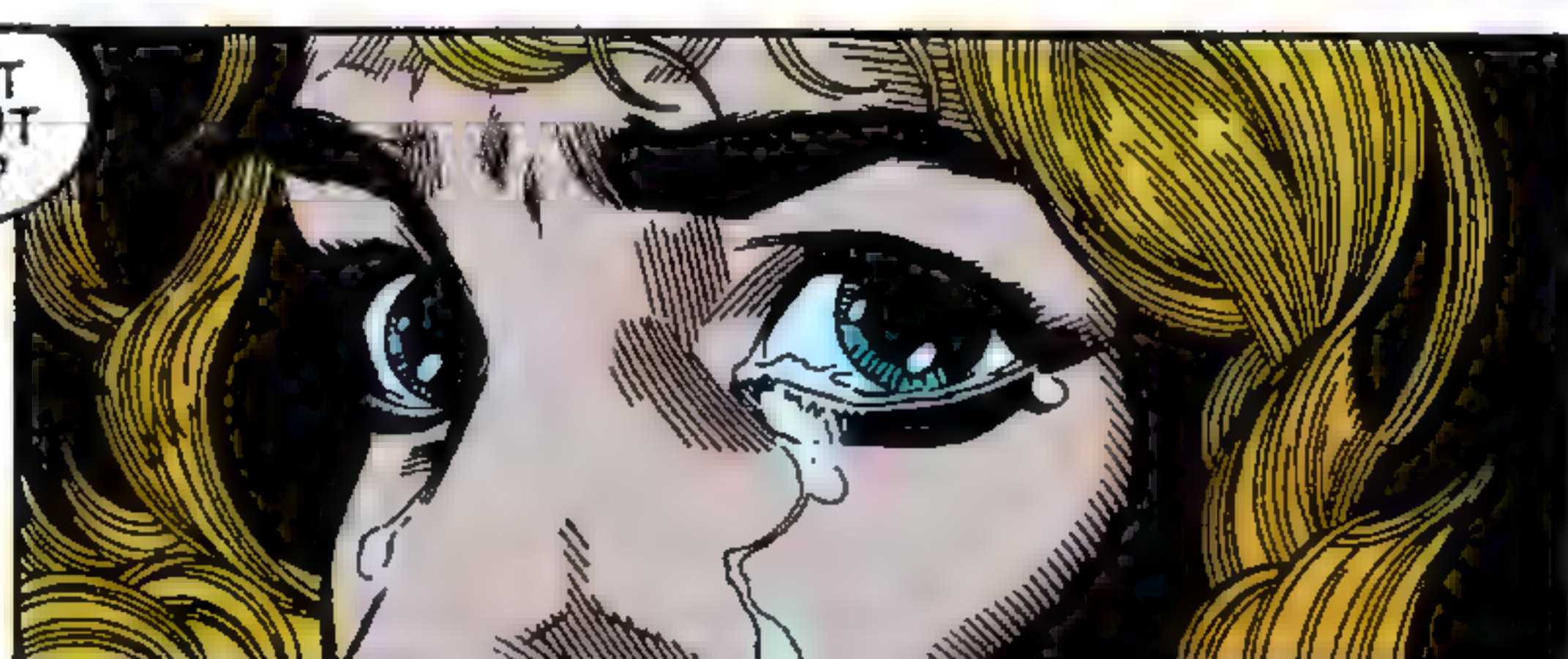
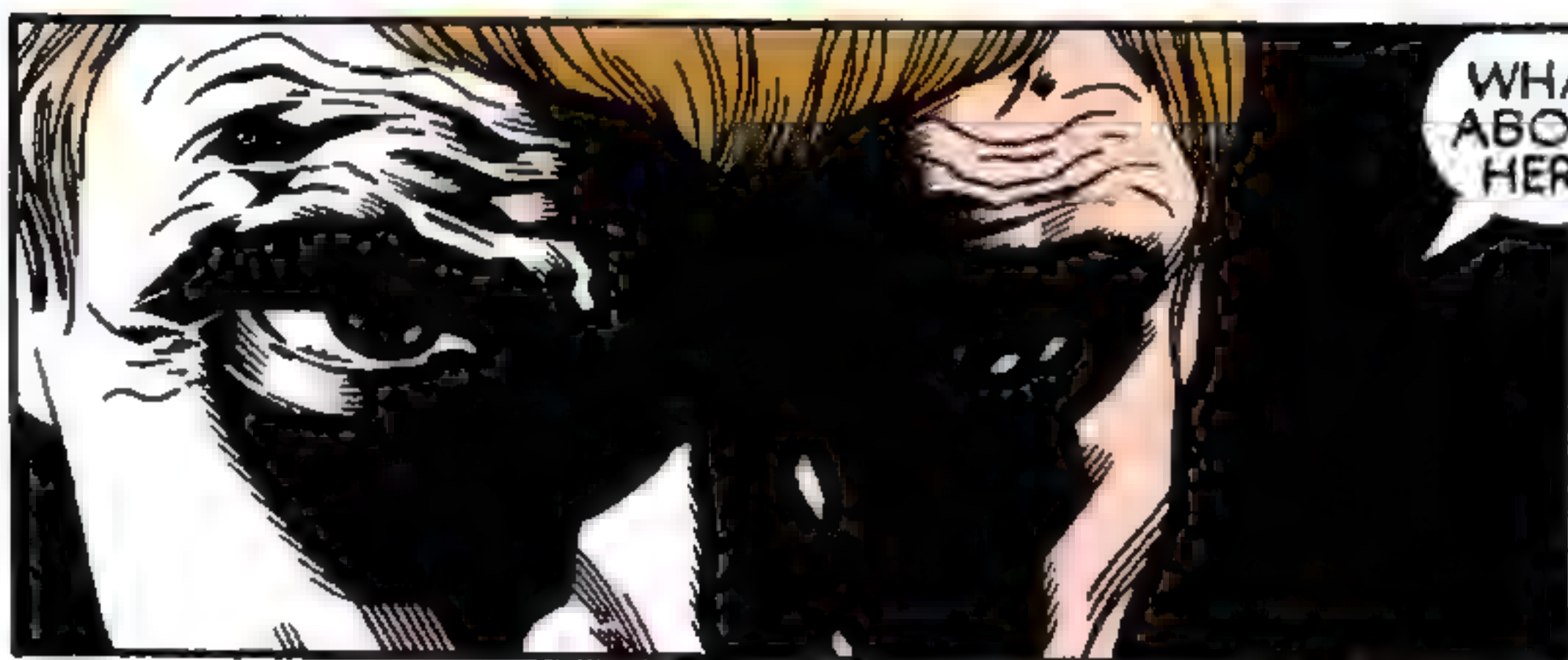
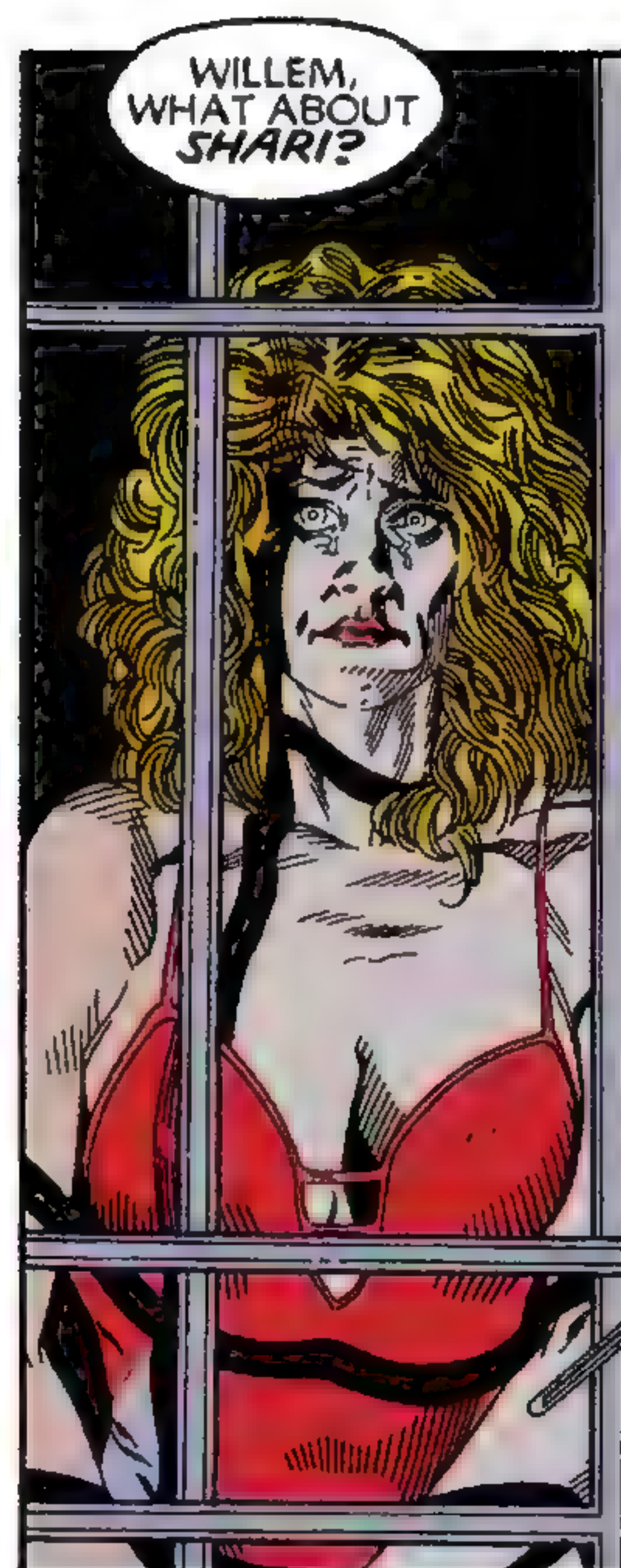
IS THAT YOUR FINAL JUDGMENT, DR. JOHANNES?

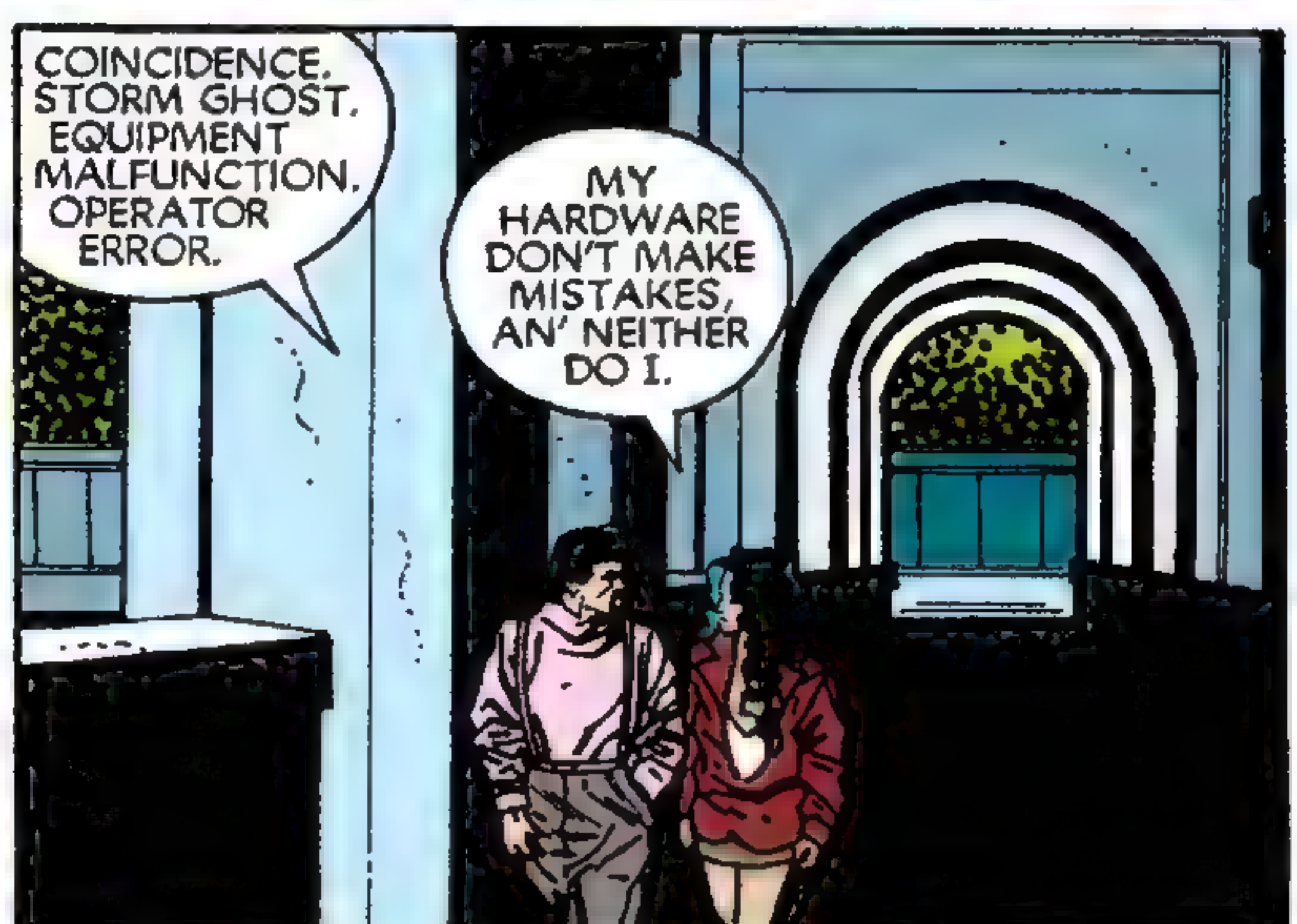
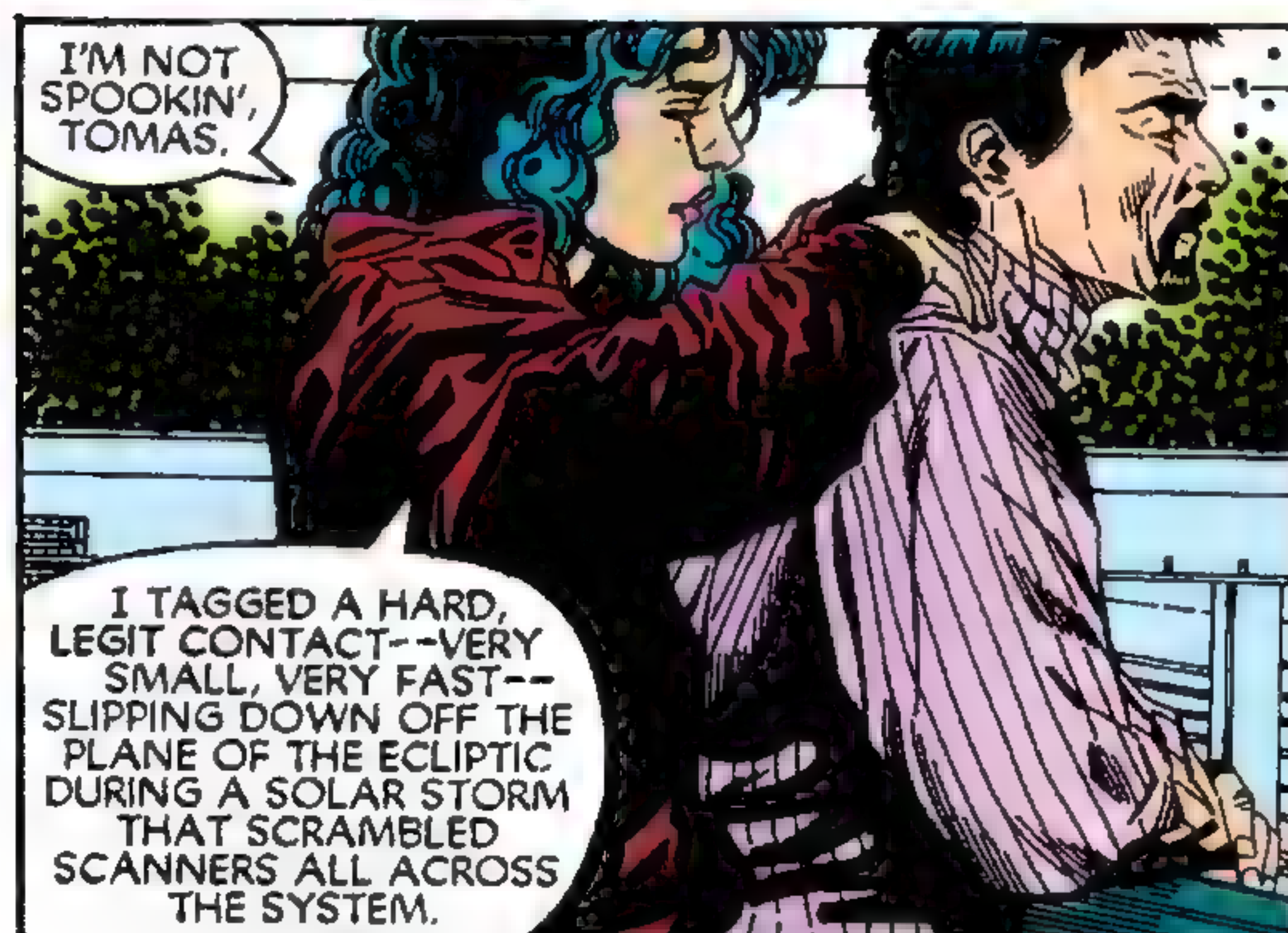
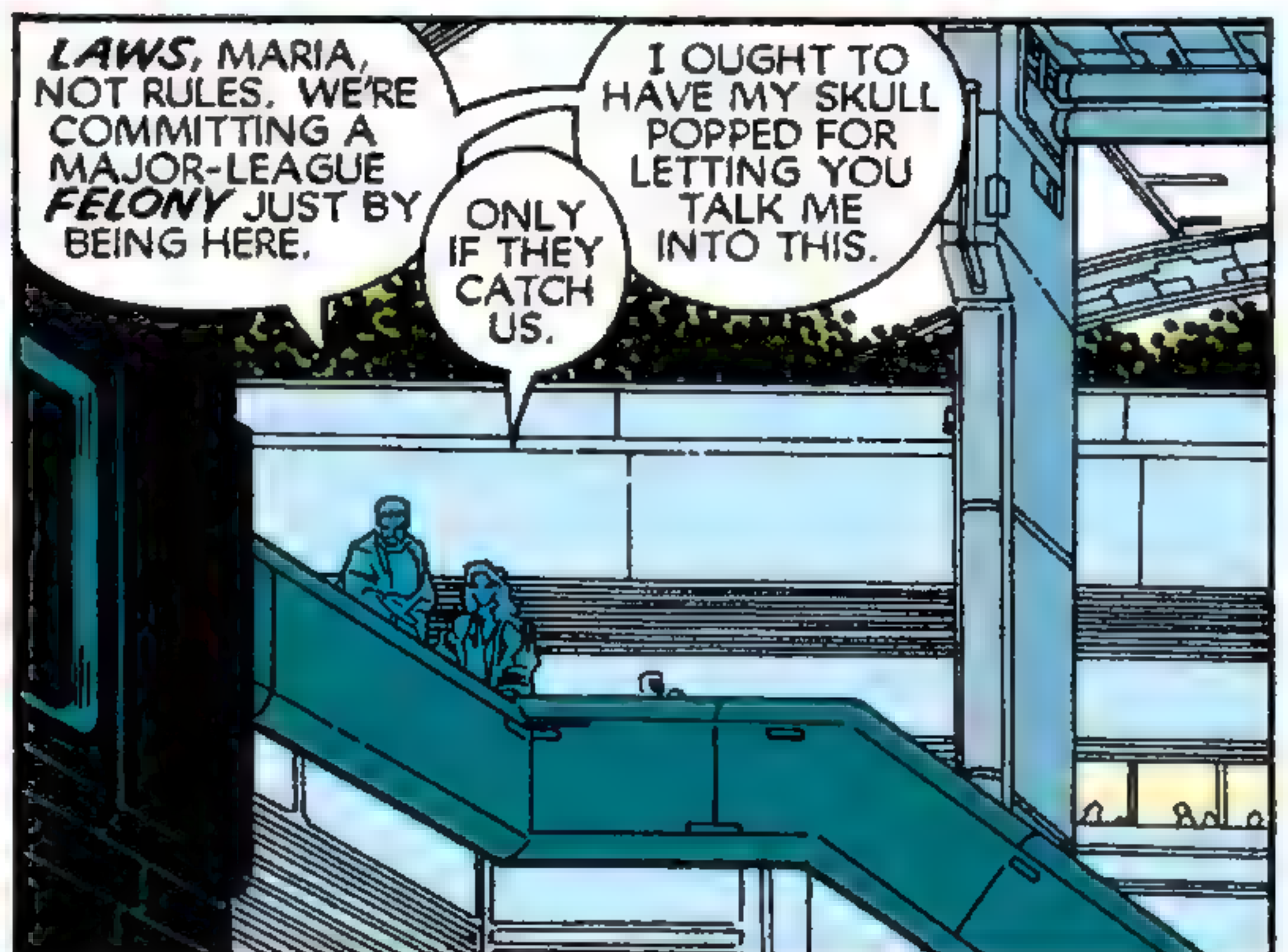
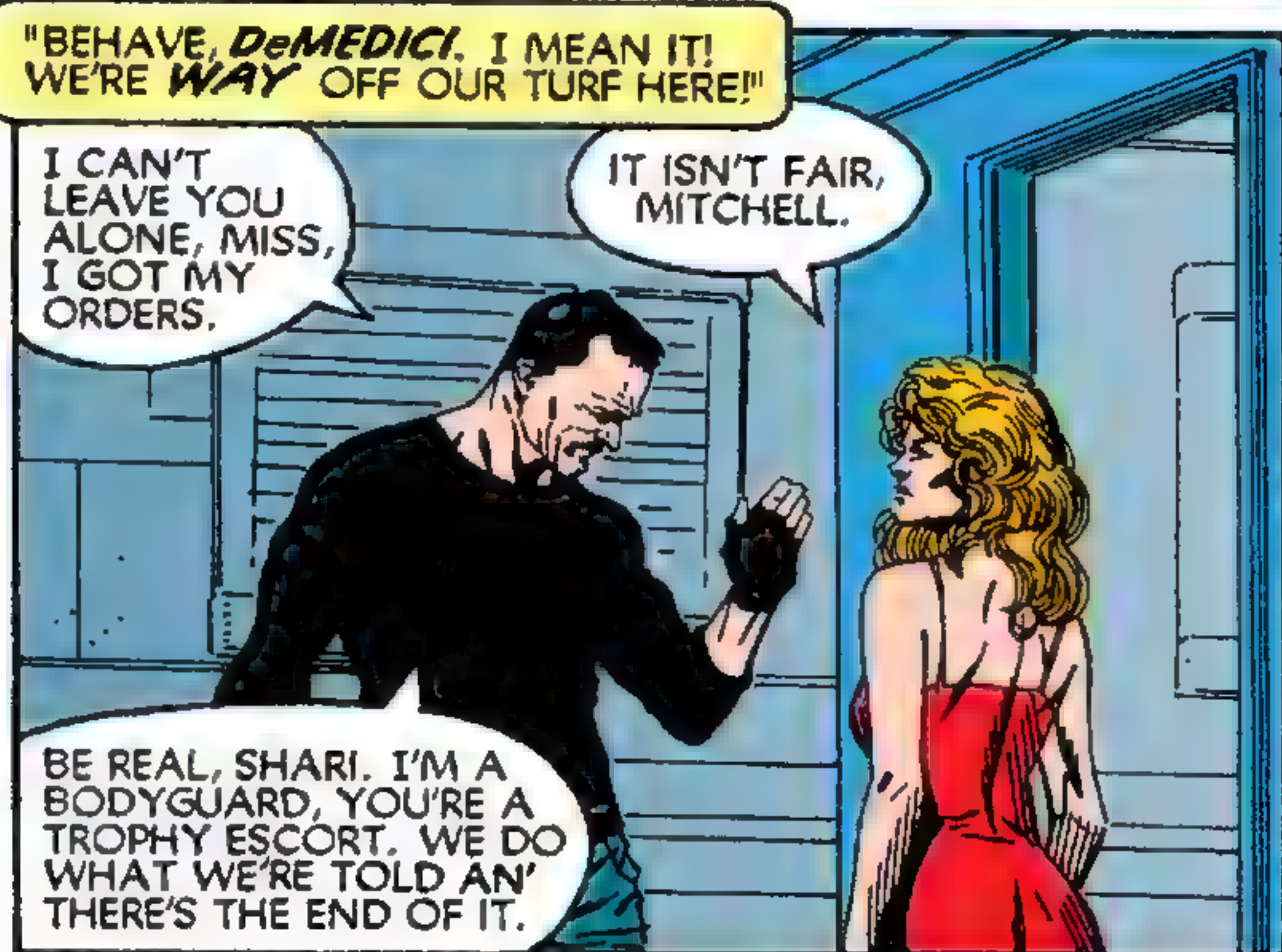
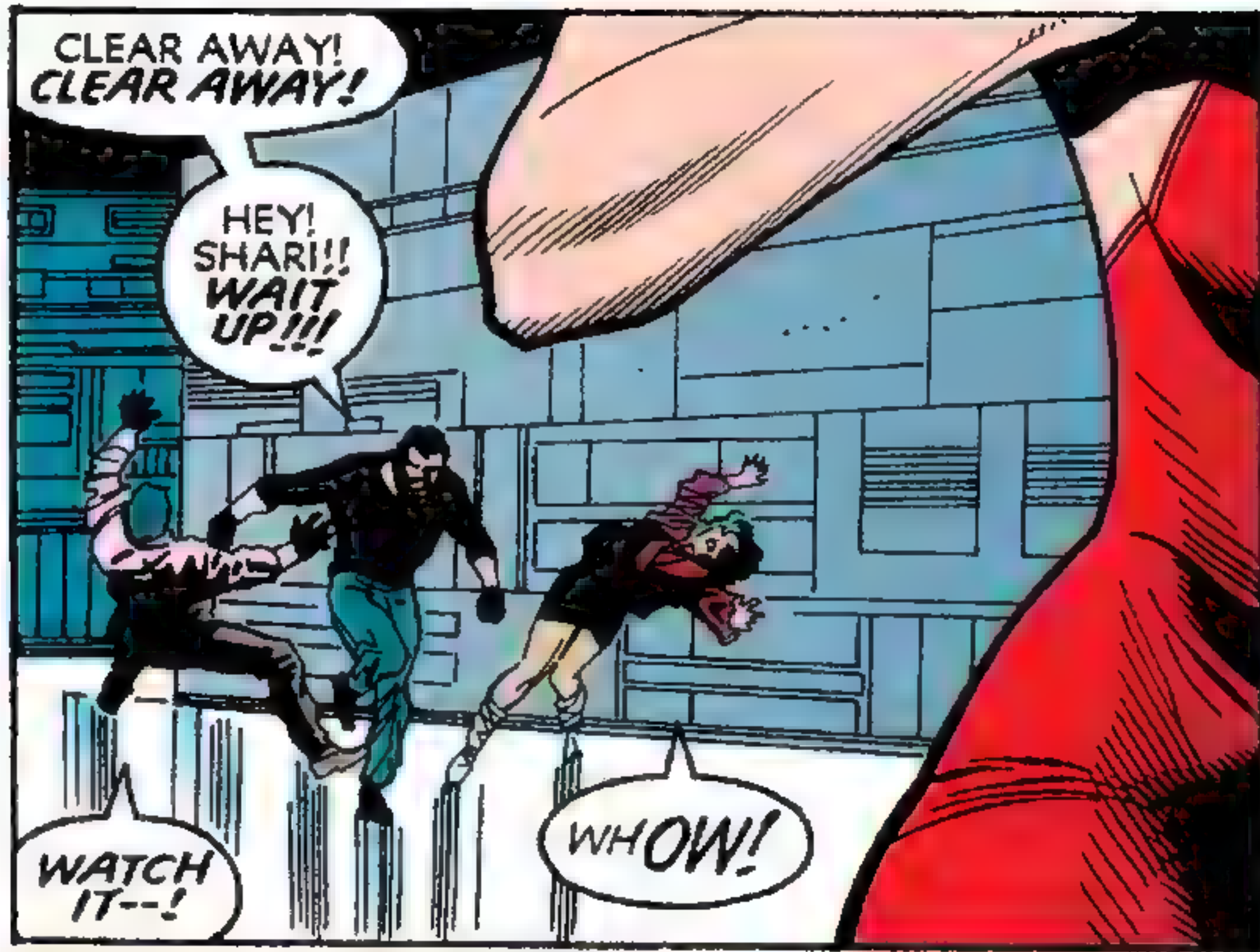
IT IS MY **FORMAL** JUDGMENT, HERR DELACROIX.

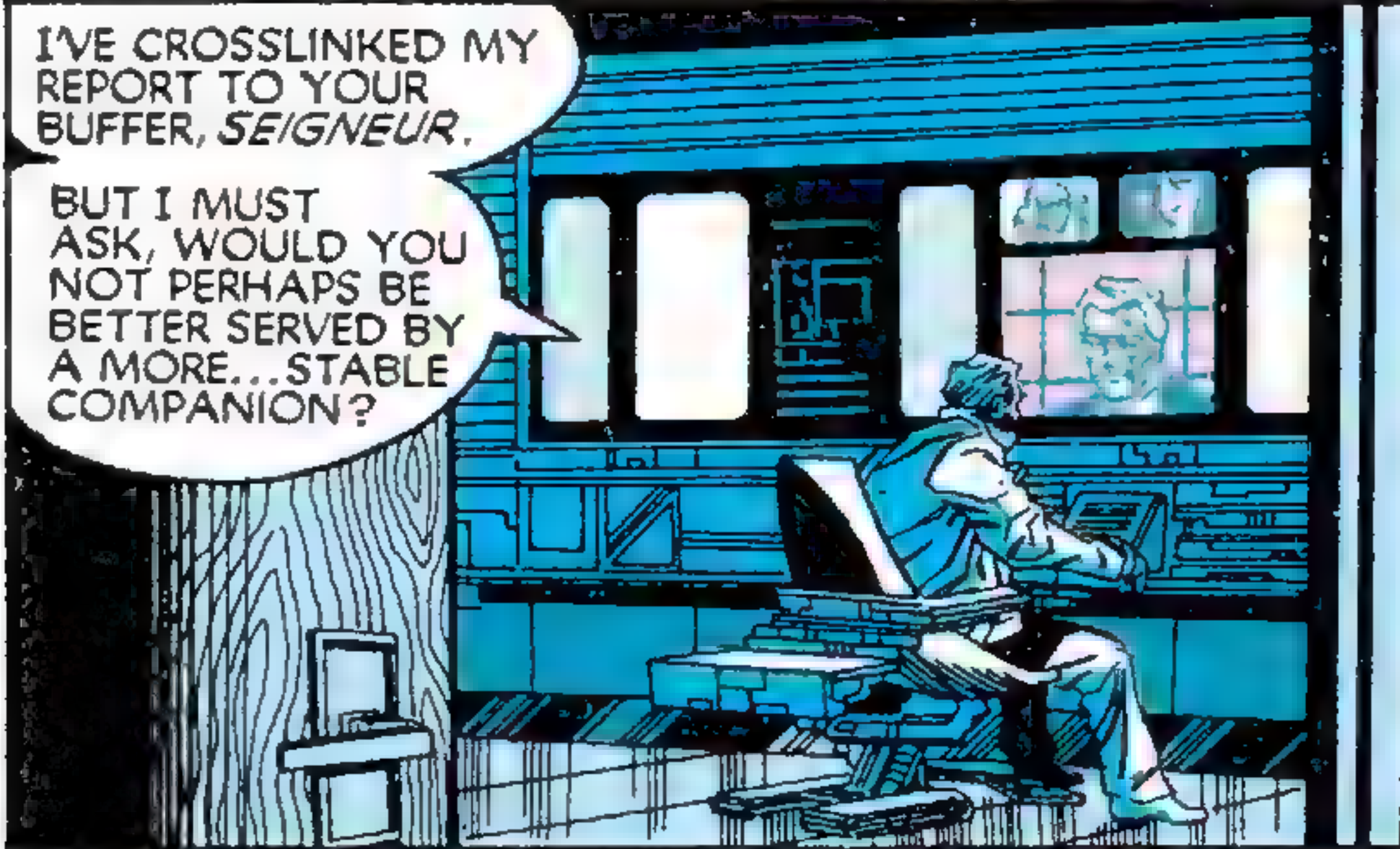
AND SO I SHALL REPORT TO YOUR **FATHER**.

WARNING: Citizens are advised to be continually on guard for any signs of ALIEN infestation. If a POD is sighted, DO NOT APPROACH. Alert SHIP SECURITY to deal with the situation. Remember, a VIGILANT society is a SAFE society!



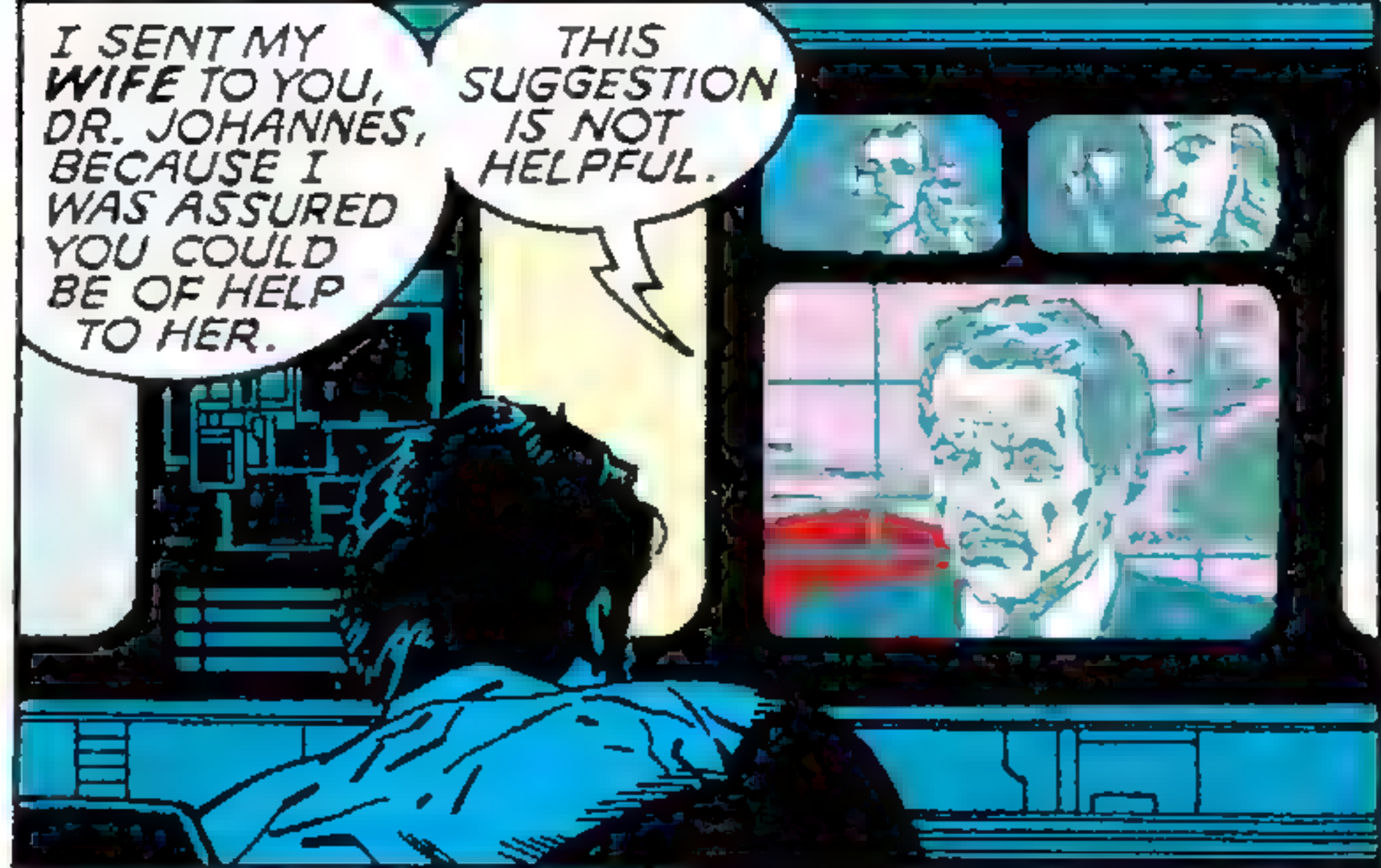






I'VE CROSSLINKED MY REPORT TO YOUR BUFFER, SEIGNEUR.

BUT I MUST ASK, WOULD YOU NOT PERHAPS BE BETTER SERVED BY A MORE... STABLE COMPANION?



I SENT MY WIFE TO YOU, DR. JOHANNES, BECAUSE I WAS ASSURED YOU COULD BE OF HELP TO HER.

THIS SUGGESTION IS NOT HELPFUL.



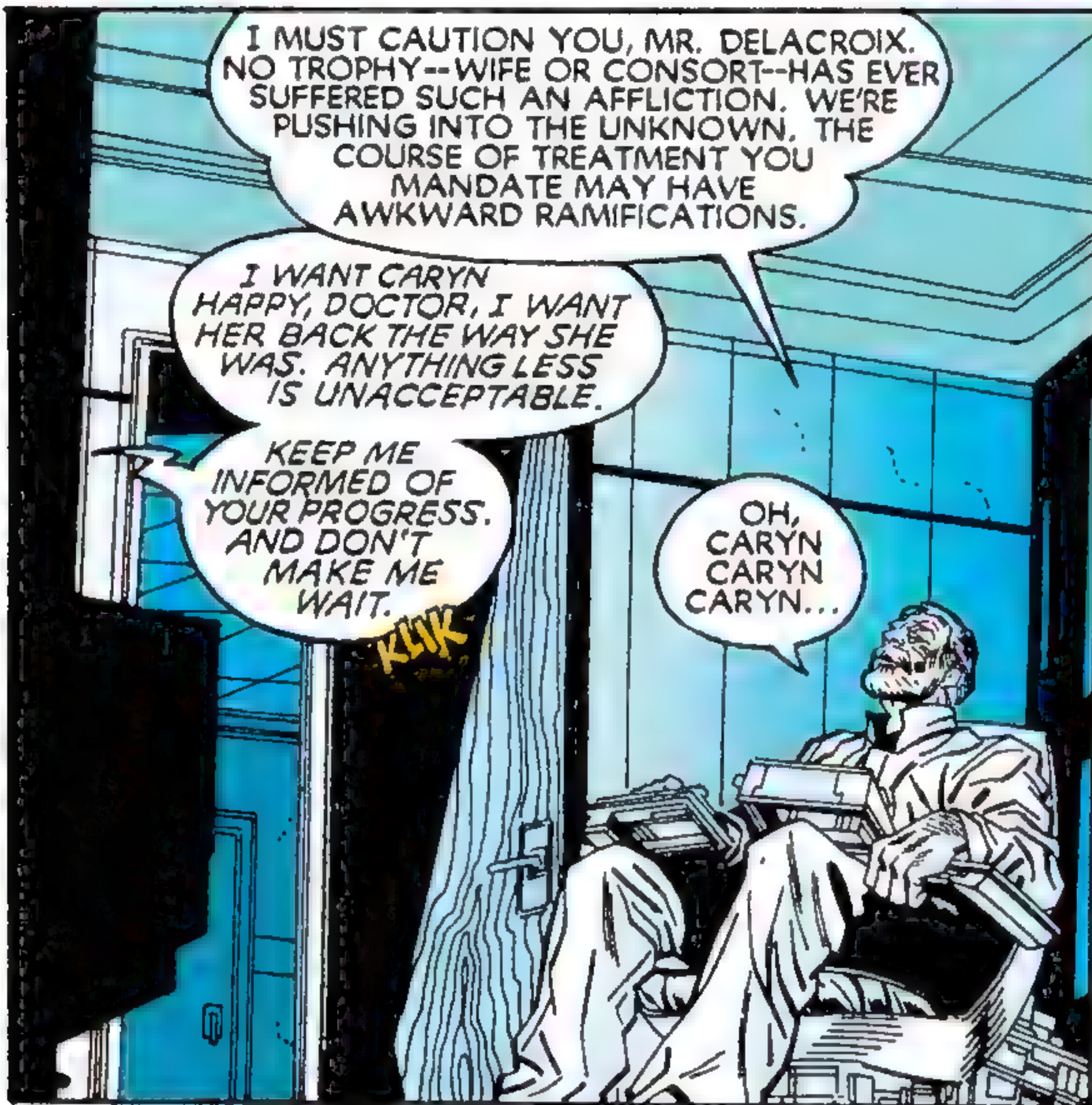
I WAS MERELY OFFERING THE MOST EXPEDITIOUS RESOLUTION TO YOUR PROBLEM.



THE "PROBLEM," DOCTOR, IS THAT MY WIFE HAS NIGHTMARES.

I DO NOT WISH TO LOSE CARYN, OR DISPOSE OF HER.

I WANT THE NIGHTMARES TO STOP.



I MUST CAUTION YOU, MR. DELACROIX. NO TROPHY--WIFE OR CONSORT--HAS EVER SUFFERED SUCH AN AFFLICTION. WE'RE PUSHING INTO THE UNKNOWN. THE COURSE OF TREATMENT YOU MANDATE MAY HAVE AWKWARD RAMIFICATIONS.

I WANT CARYN HAPPY, DOCTOR, I WANT HER BACK THE WAY SHE WAS. ANYTHING LESS IS UNACCEPTABLE.

KEEP ME INFORMED OF YOUR PROGRESS. AND DON'T MAKE ME WAIT.

OH, CARYN CARYN CARYN...



...WHAT A CONUNDRUM YOU ARE.

WHAT A MESS THIS IS.

HE WANTS YOU HAPPY, AND HE WANTS YOU BY HIS SIDE.

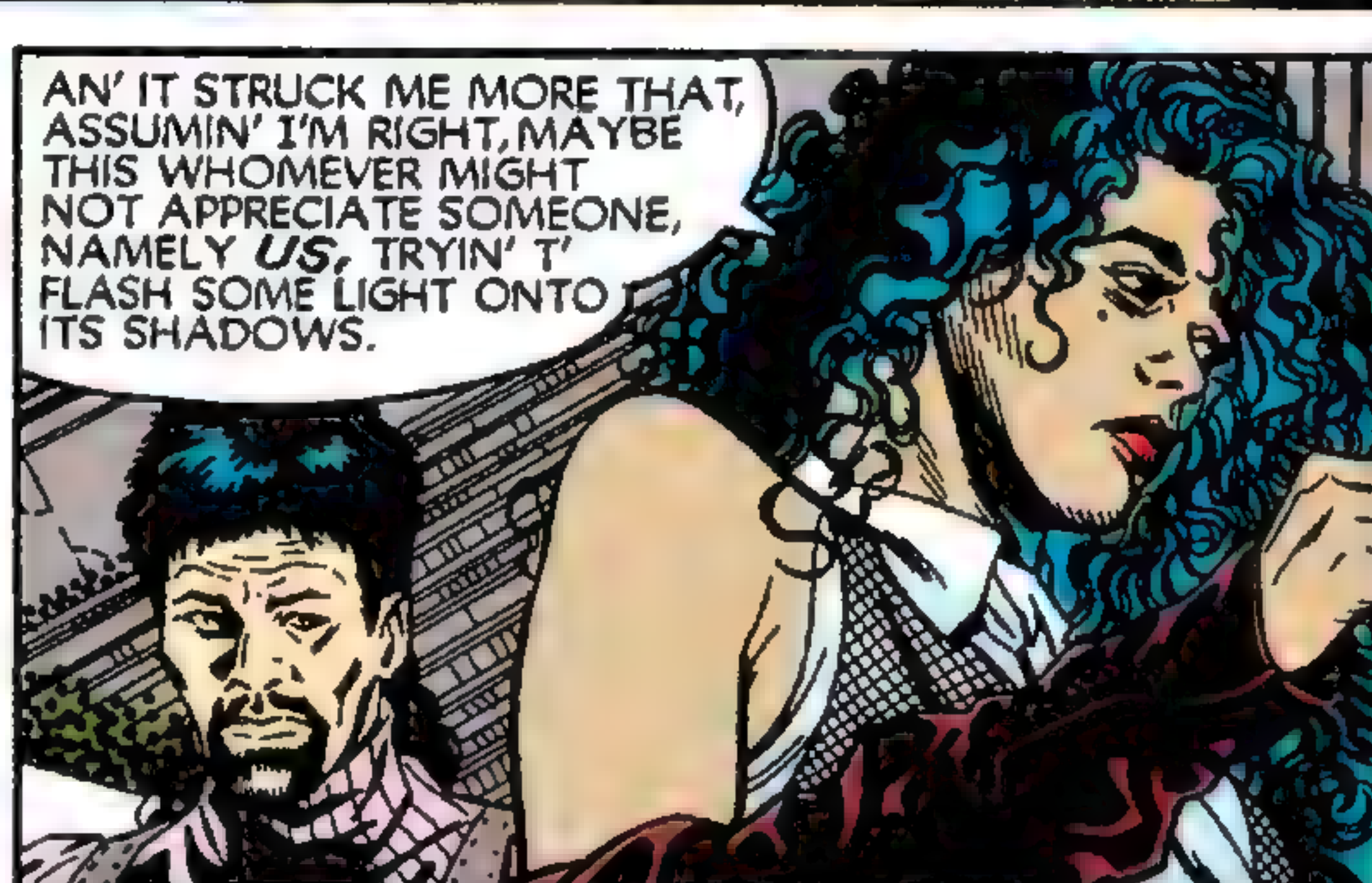
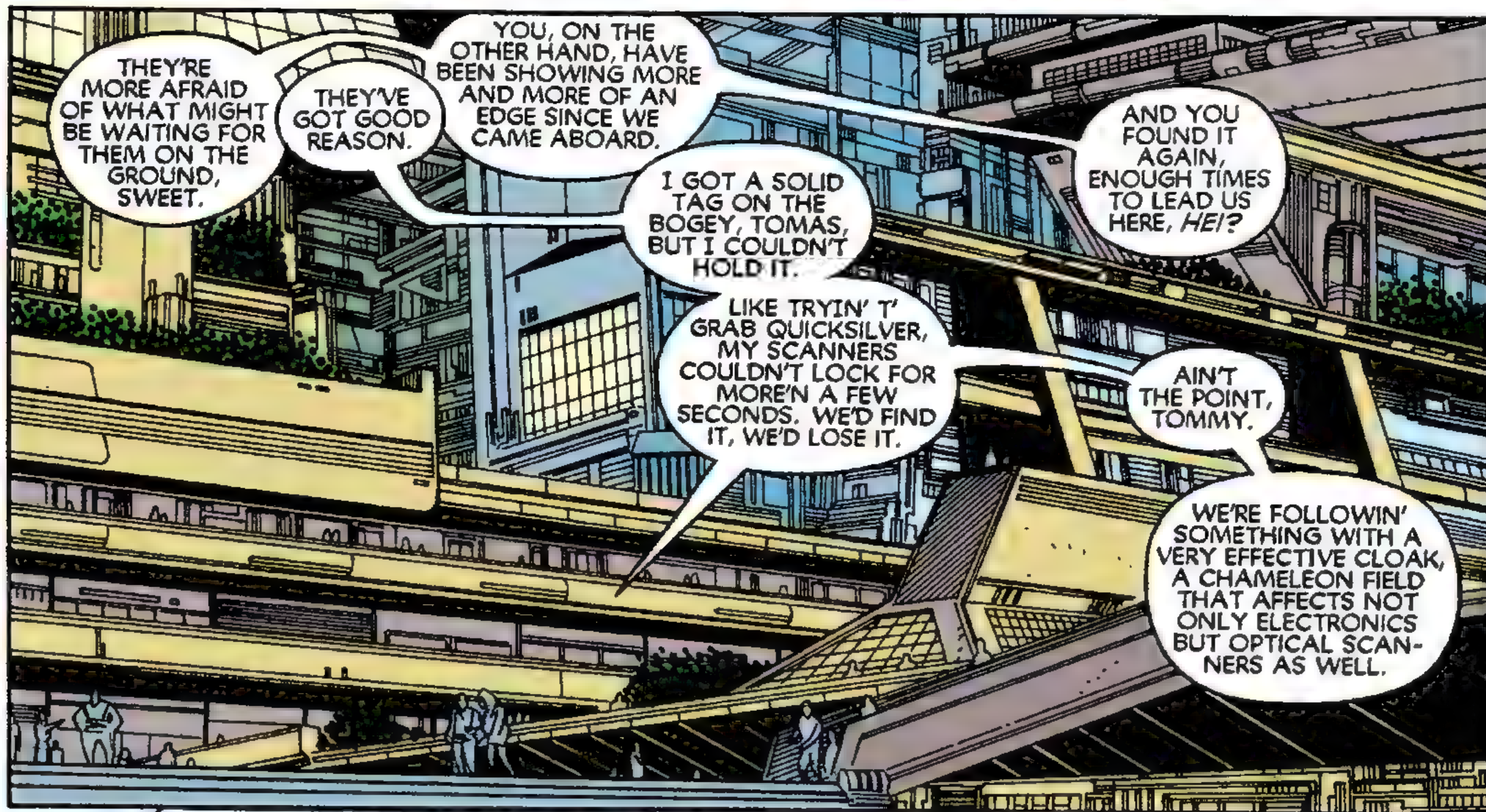
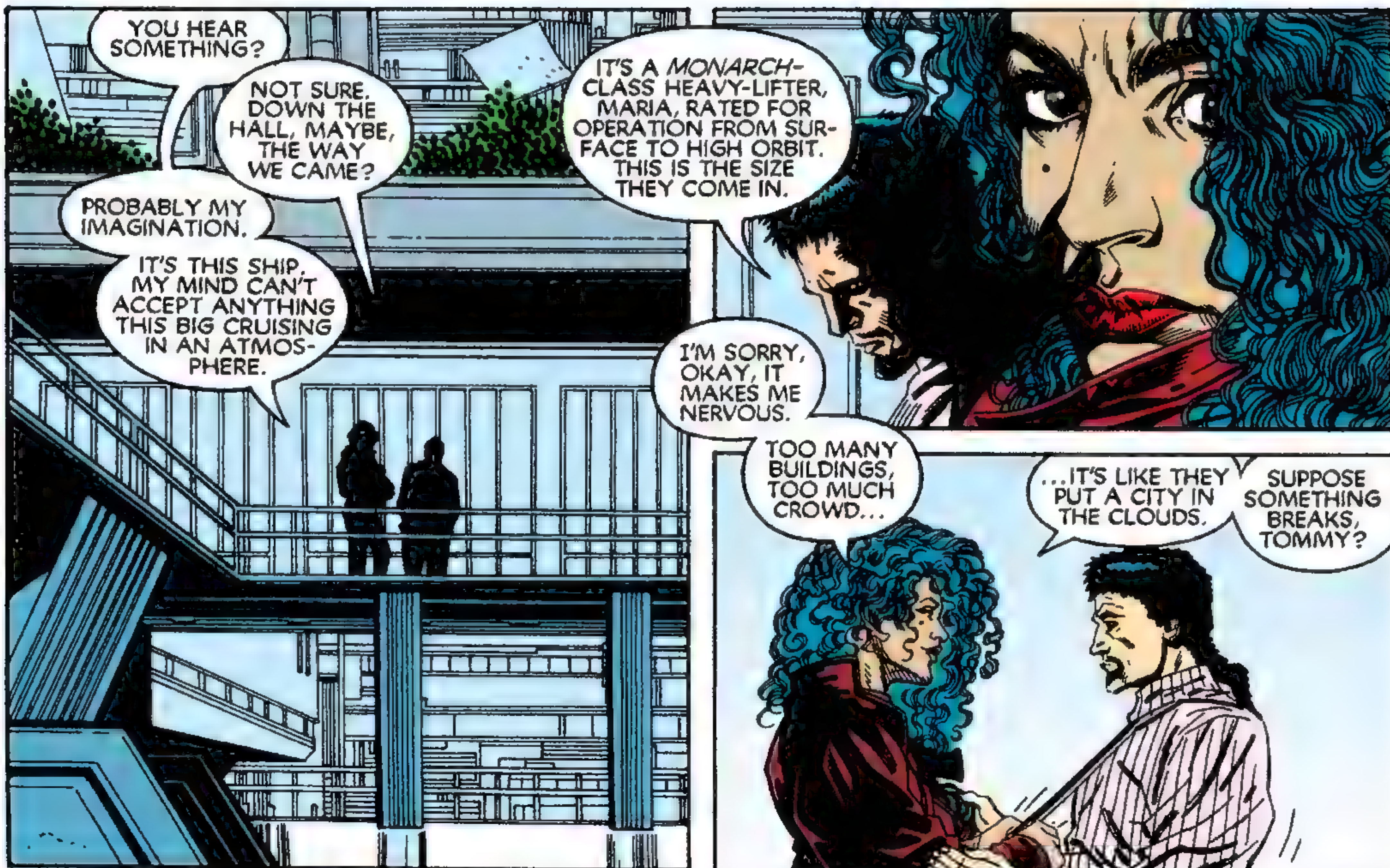
SUPPOSE THE TWO ARE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE?

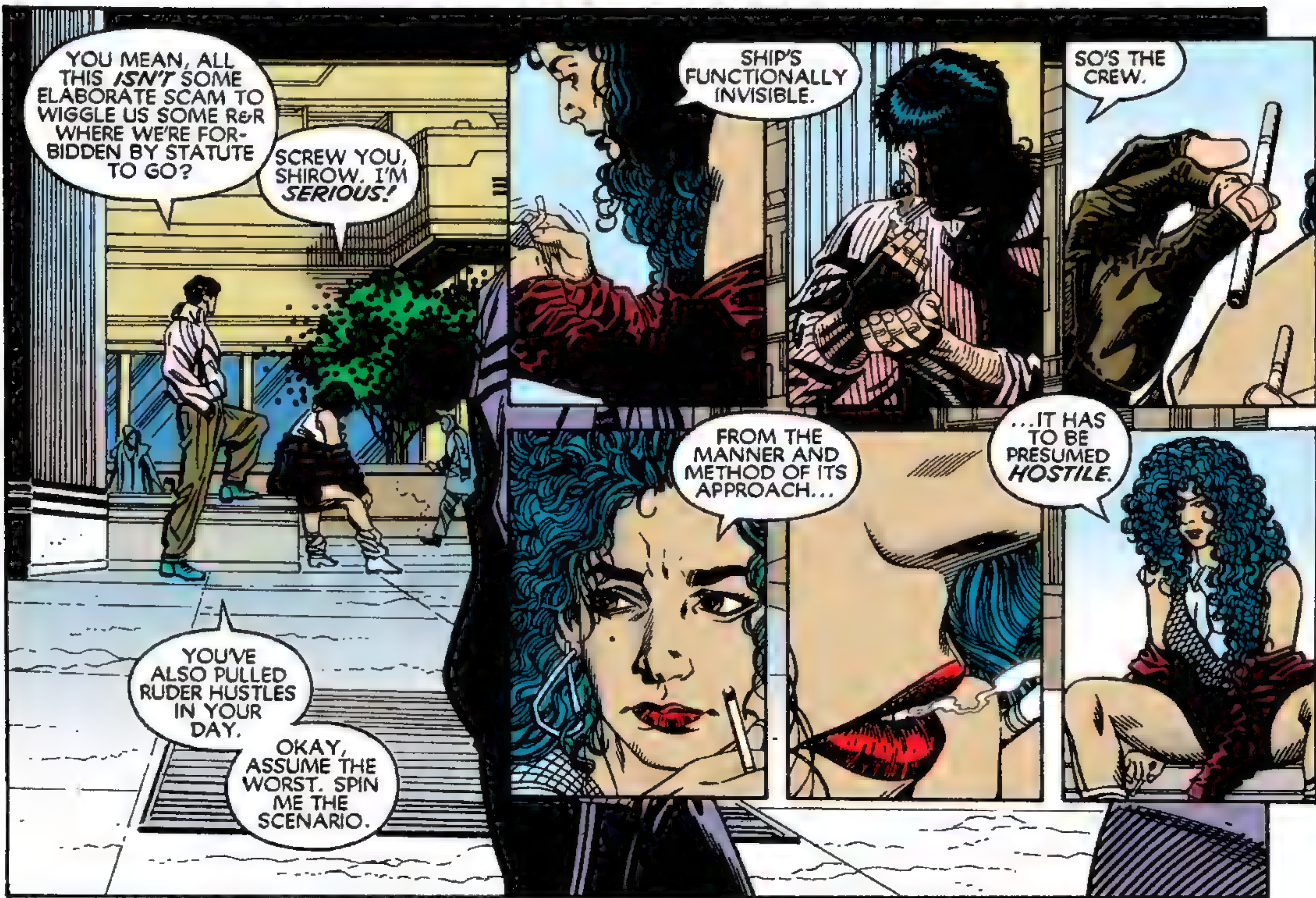


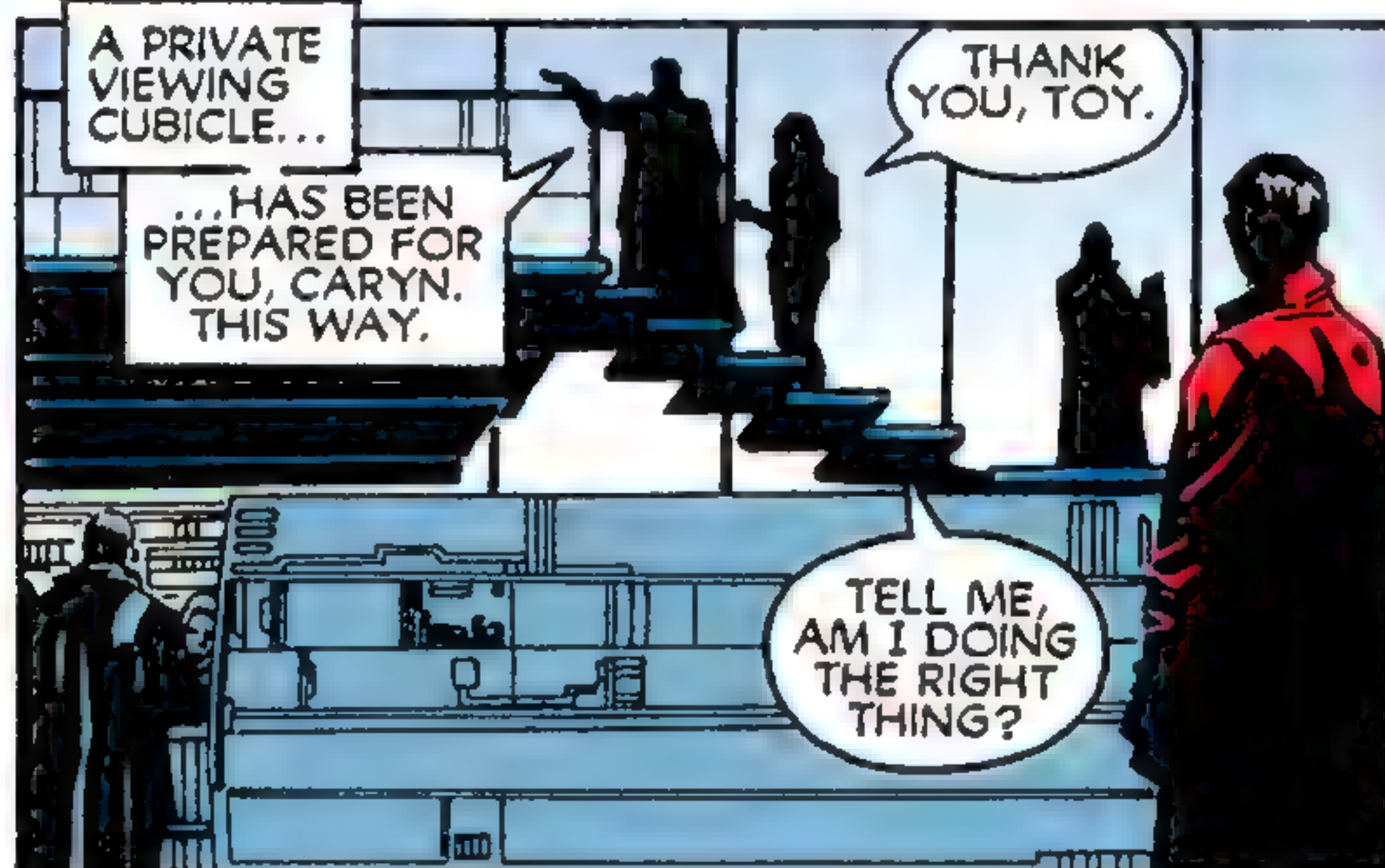
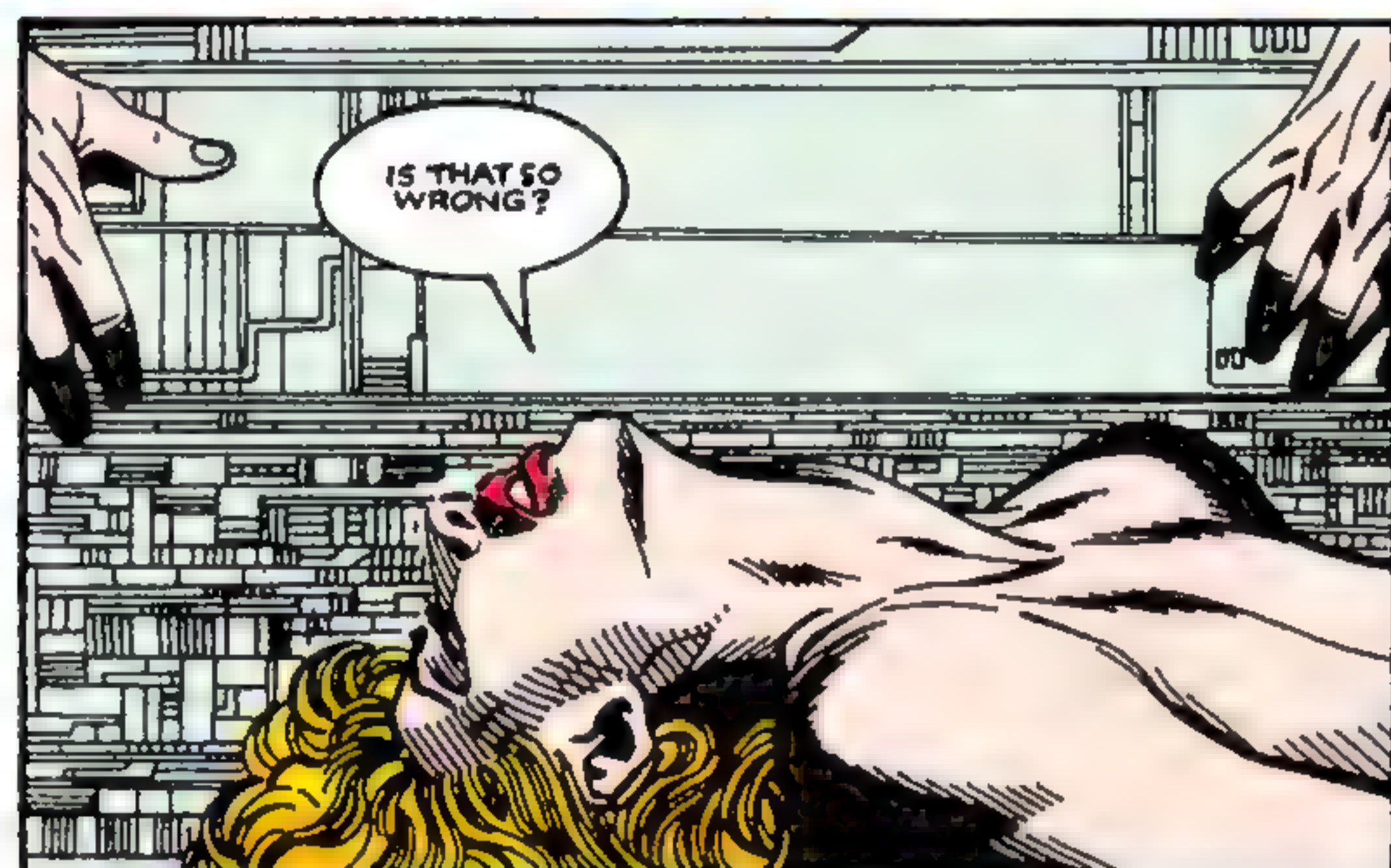
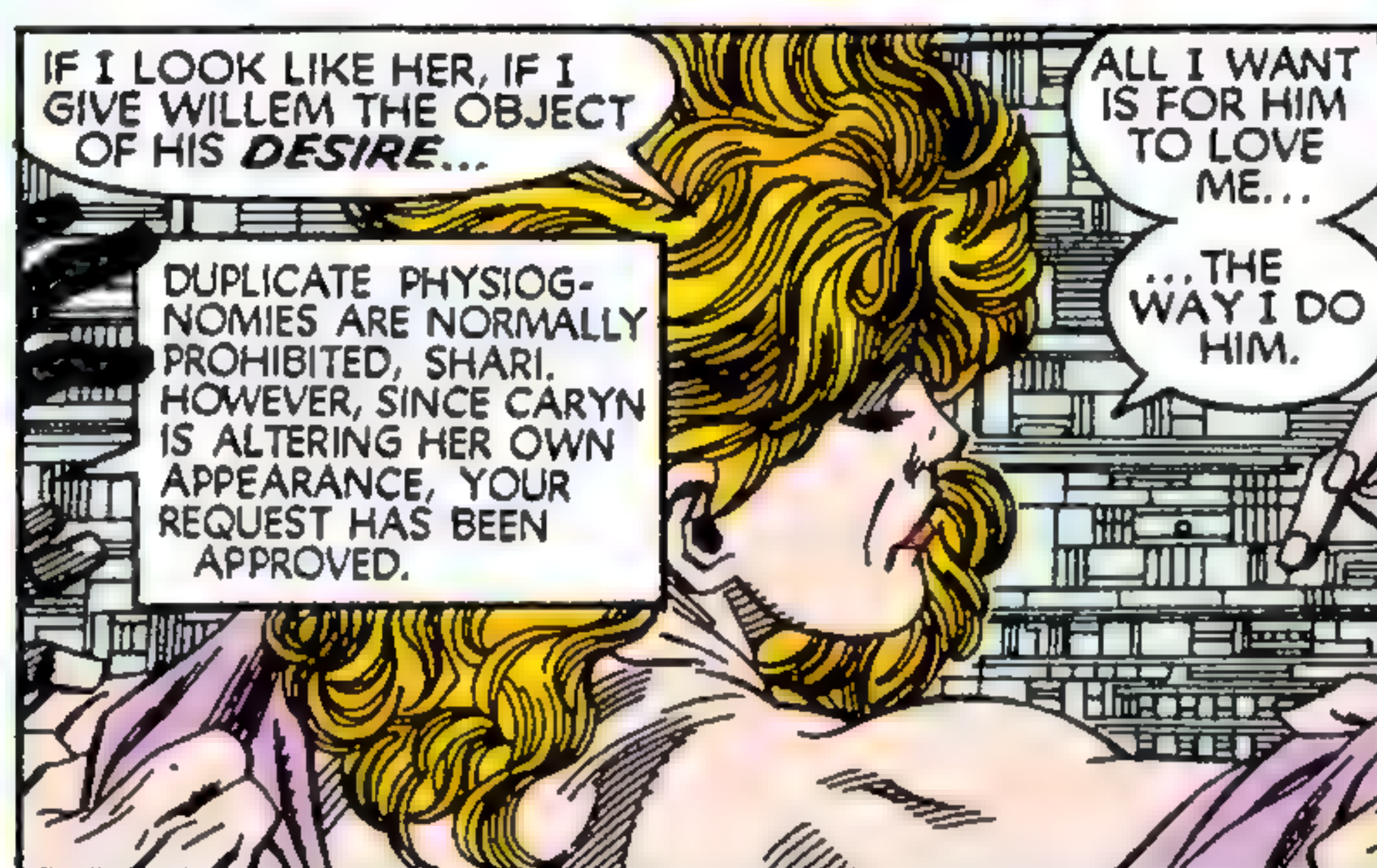
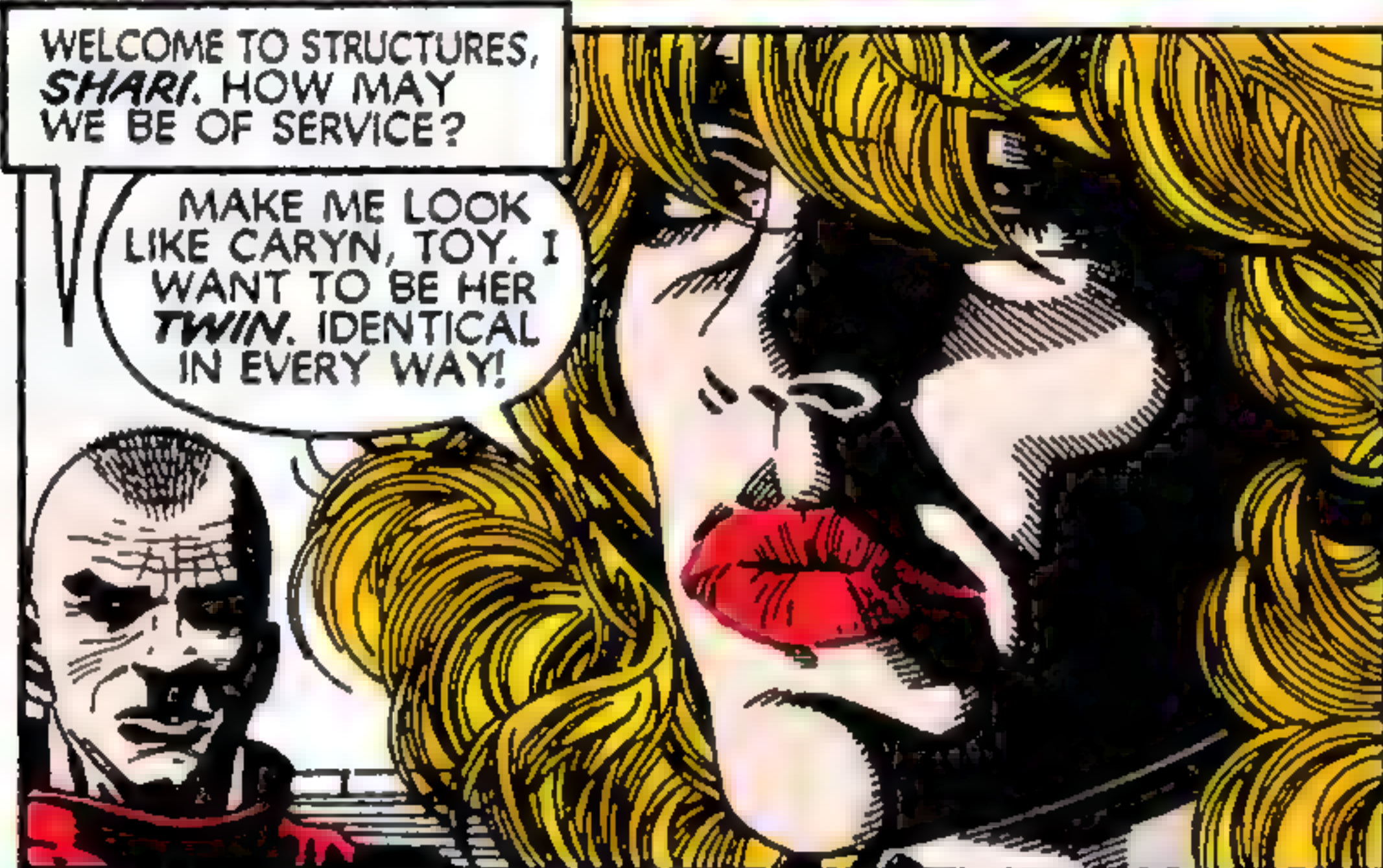
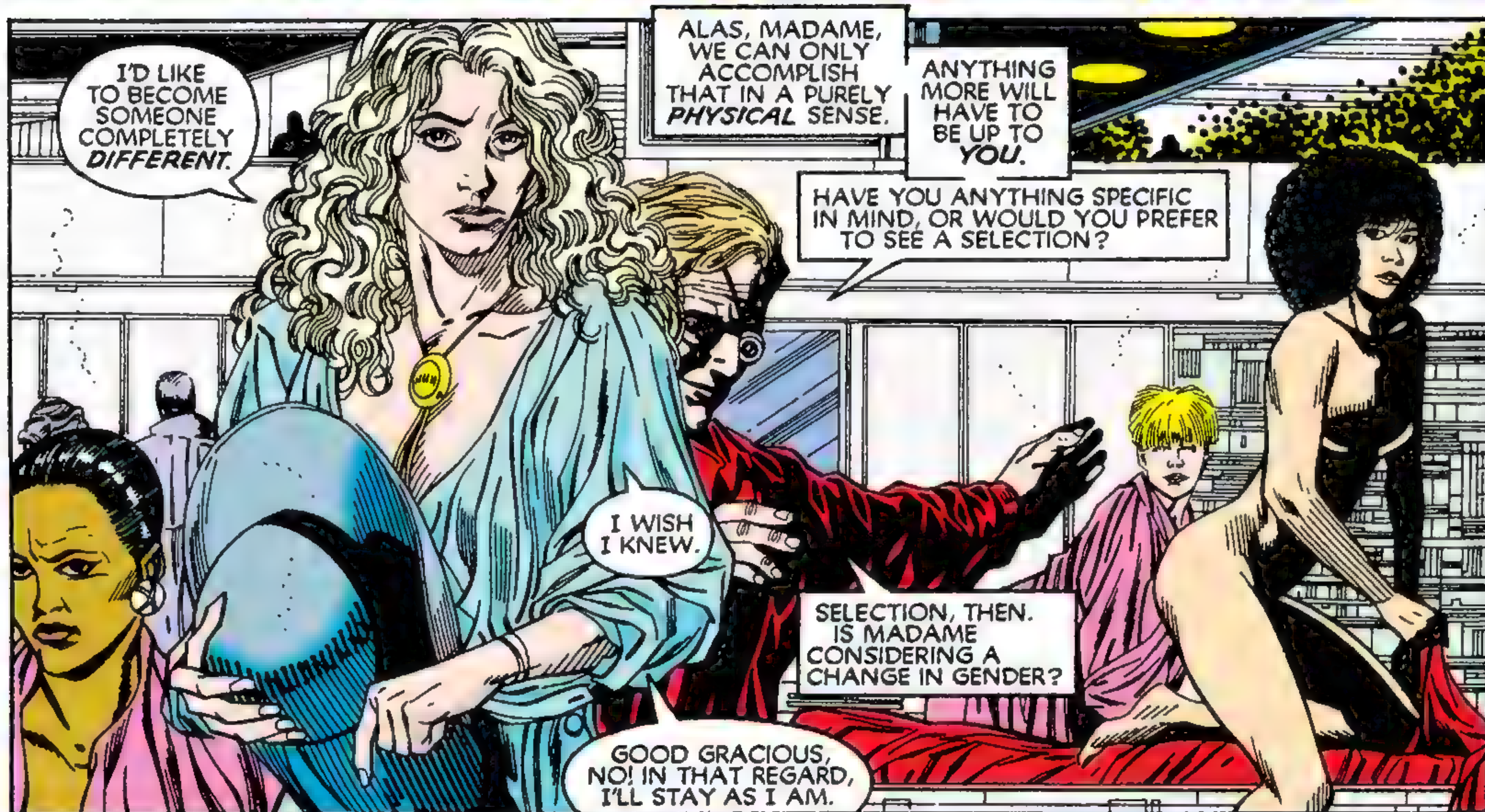
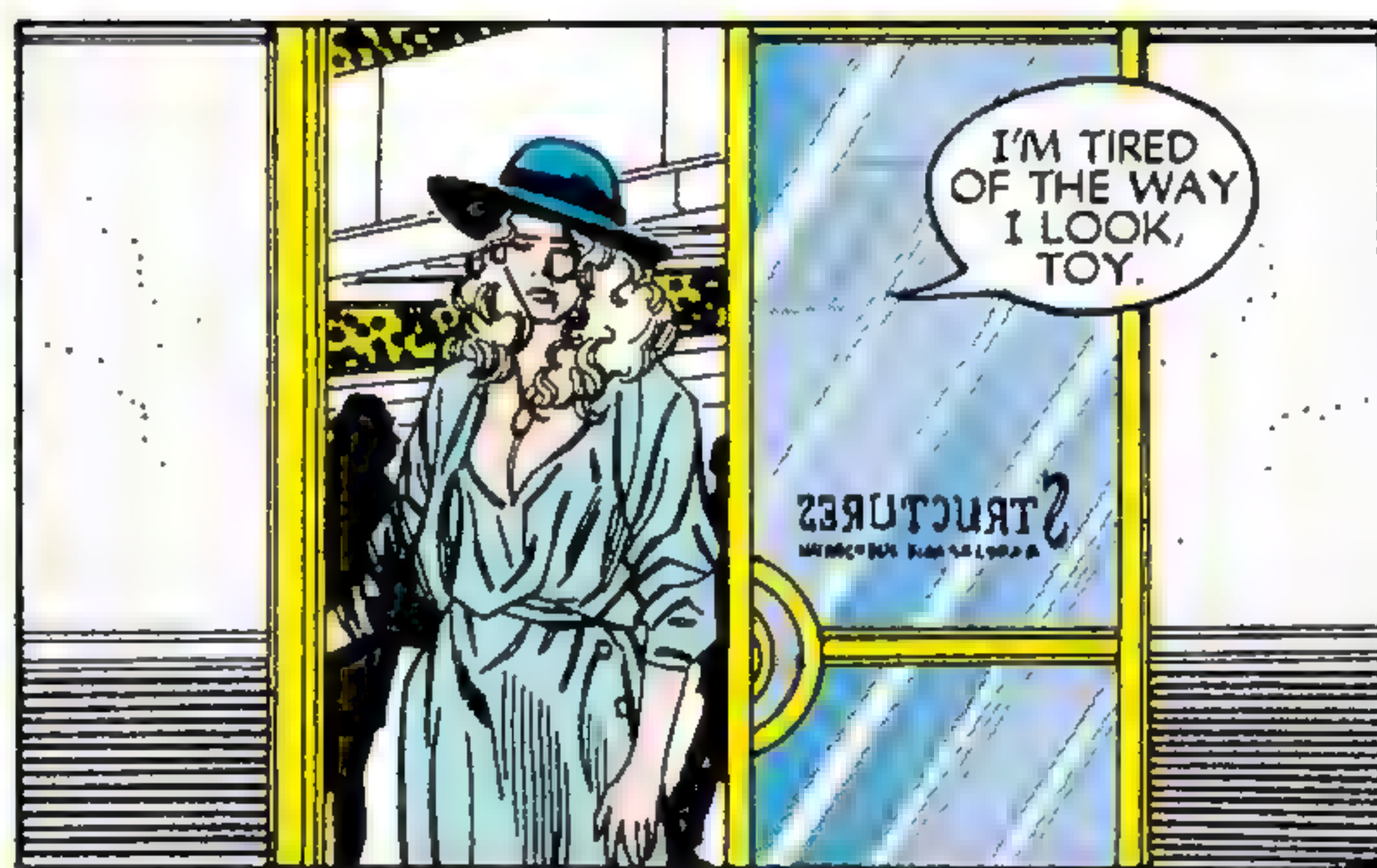
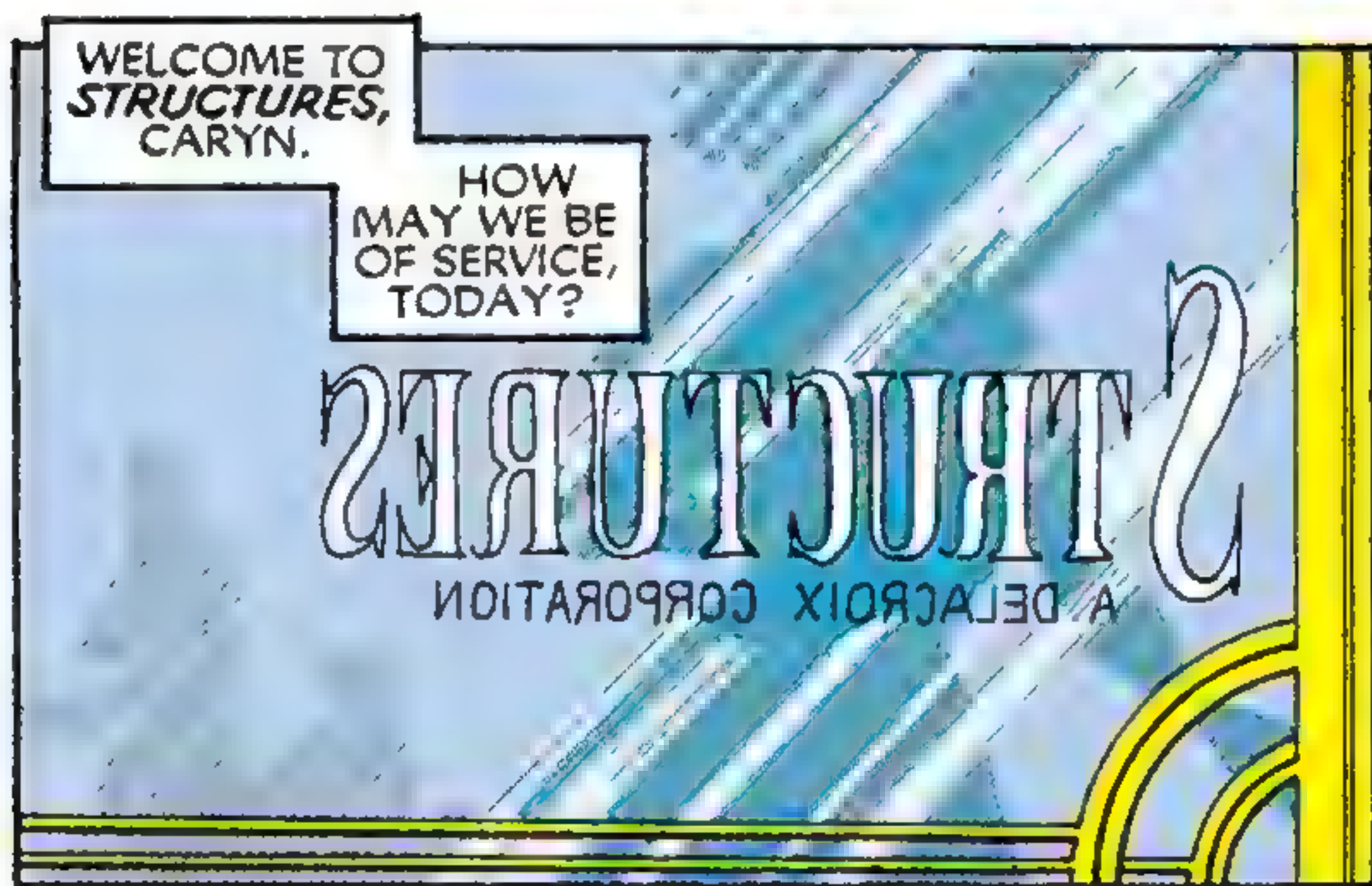
GASP!

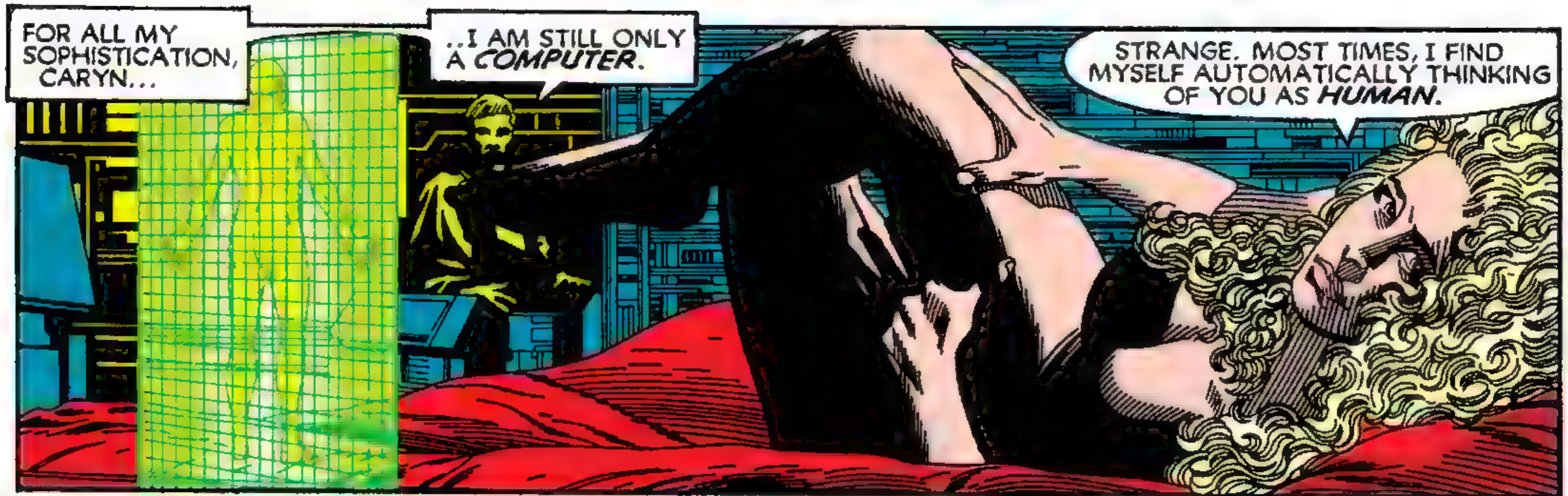
MATER CHRISTI--











FOR ALL MY SOPHISTICATION, CARYN...

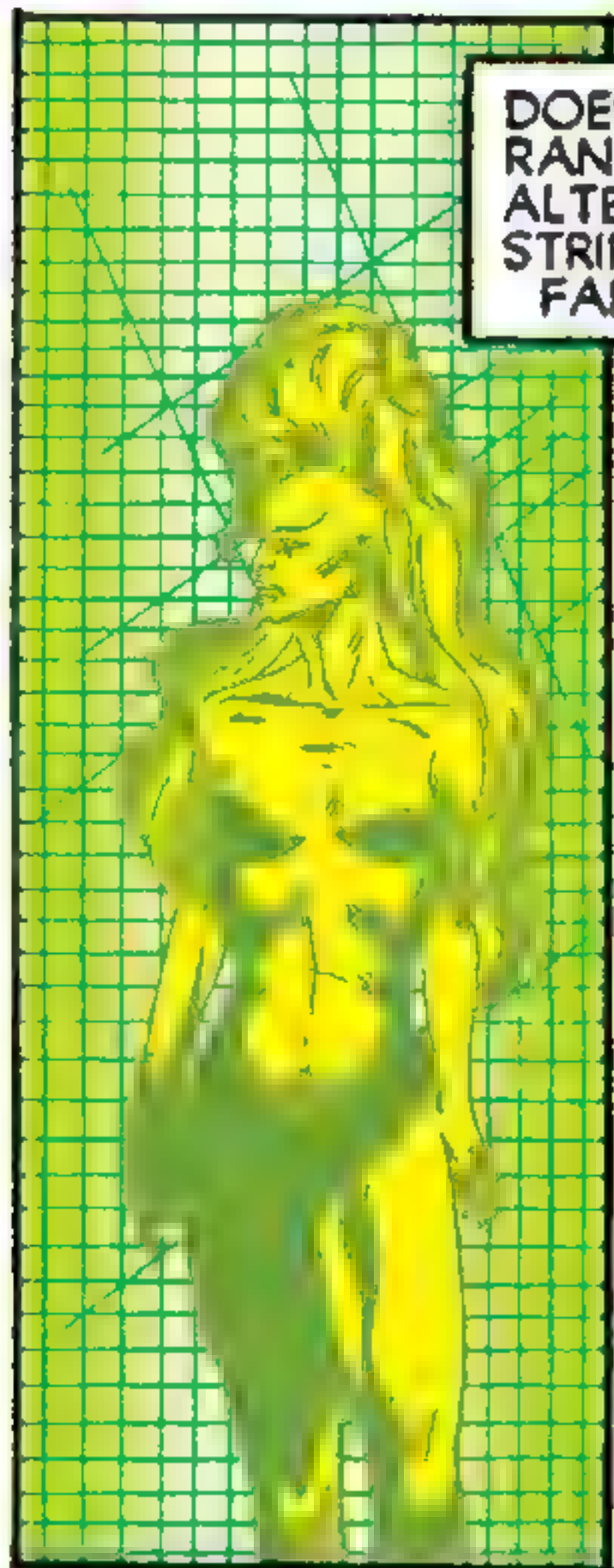
...I AM STILL ONLY A *COMPUTER*.

STRANGE. MOST TIMES, I FIND MYSELF AUTOMATICALLY THINKING OF YOU AS *HUMAN*.

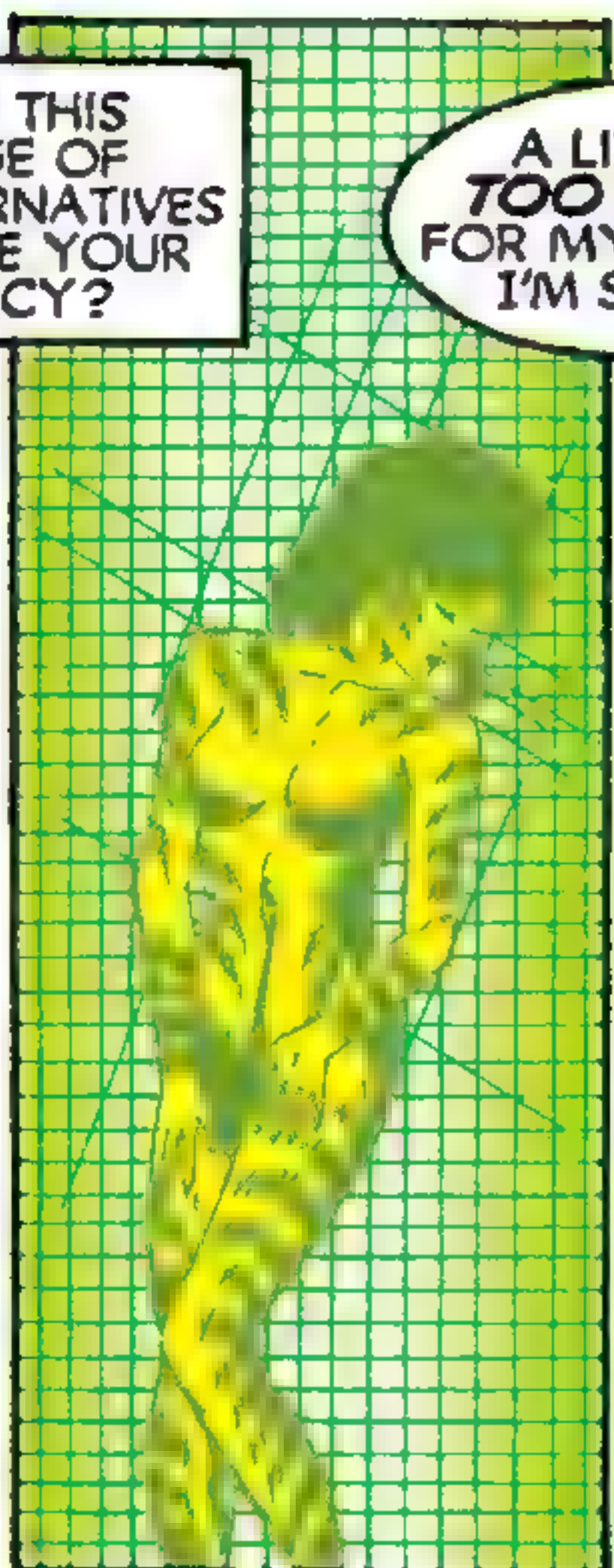


REGARDING CHOICES, ARE YOU THINKING IN CONSERVATIVE TERMS OR AVANT-GARDE? MUNDANE OR EXOTIC?

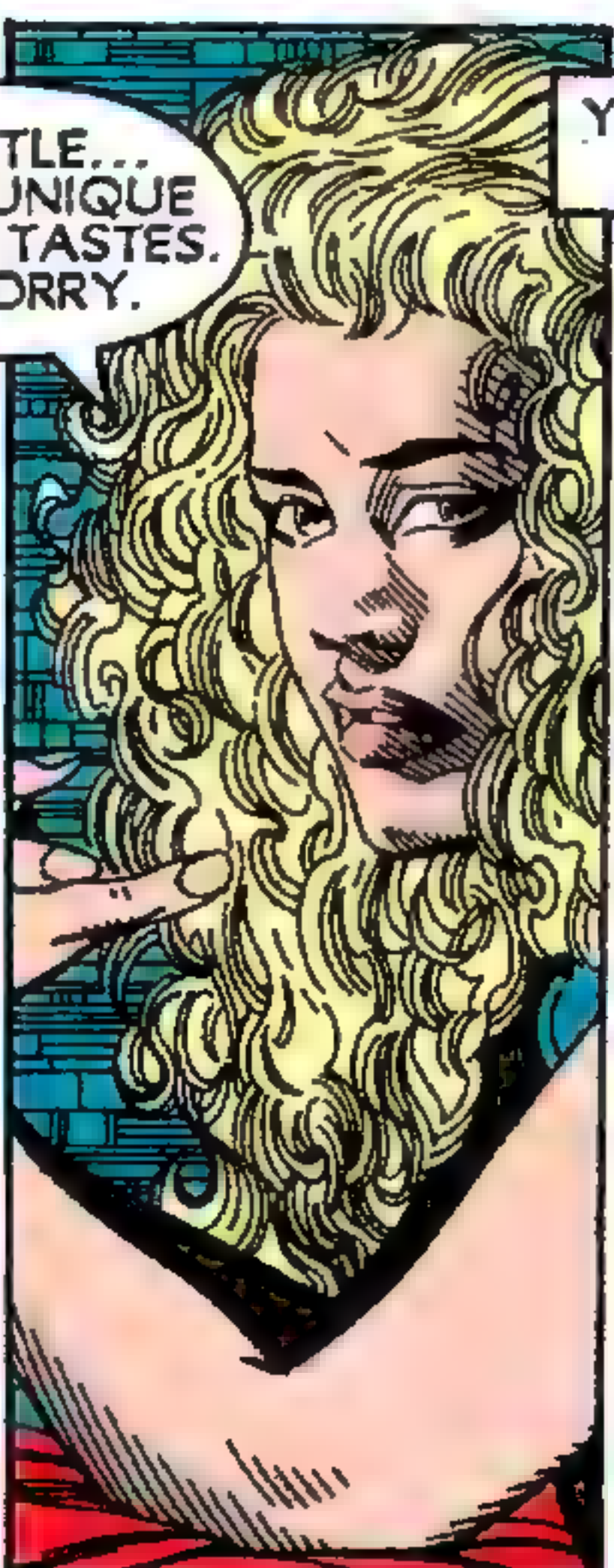
I'M NOT SURE. SOMETHING SPECIAL? SOMETHING UNIQUE?



DOES THIS RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES STRIKE YOUR FANCY?

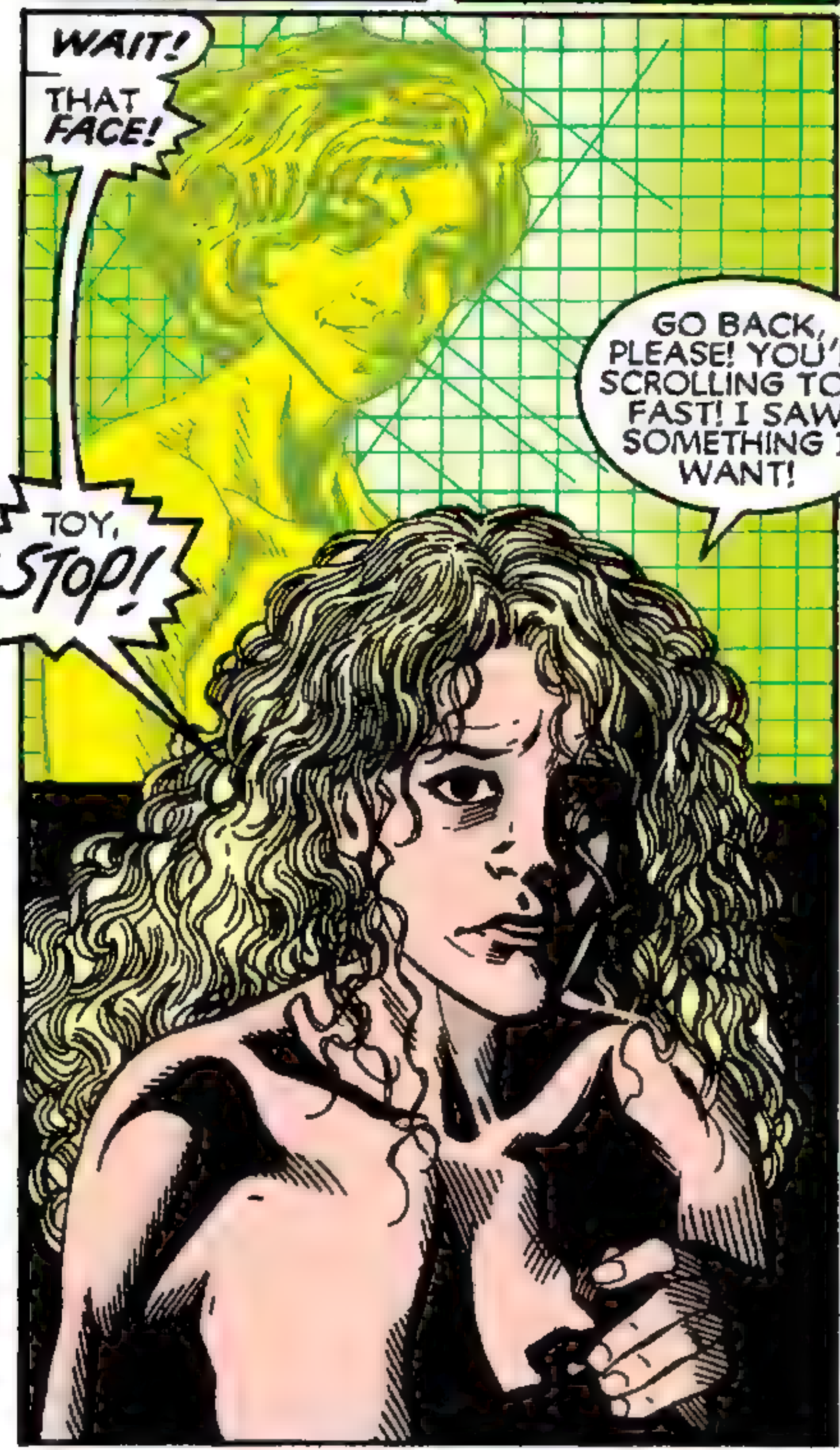
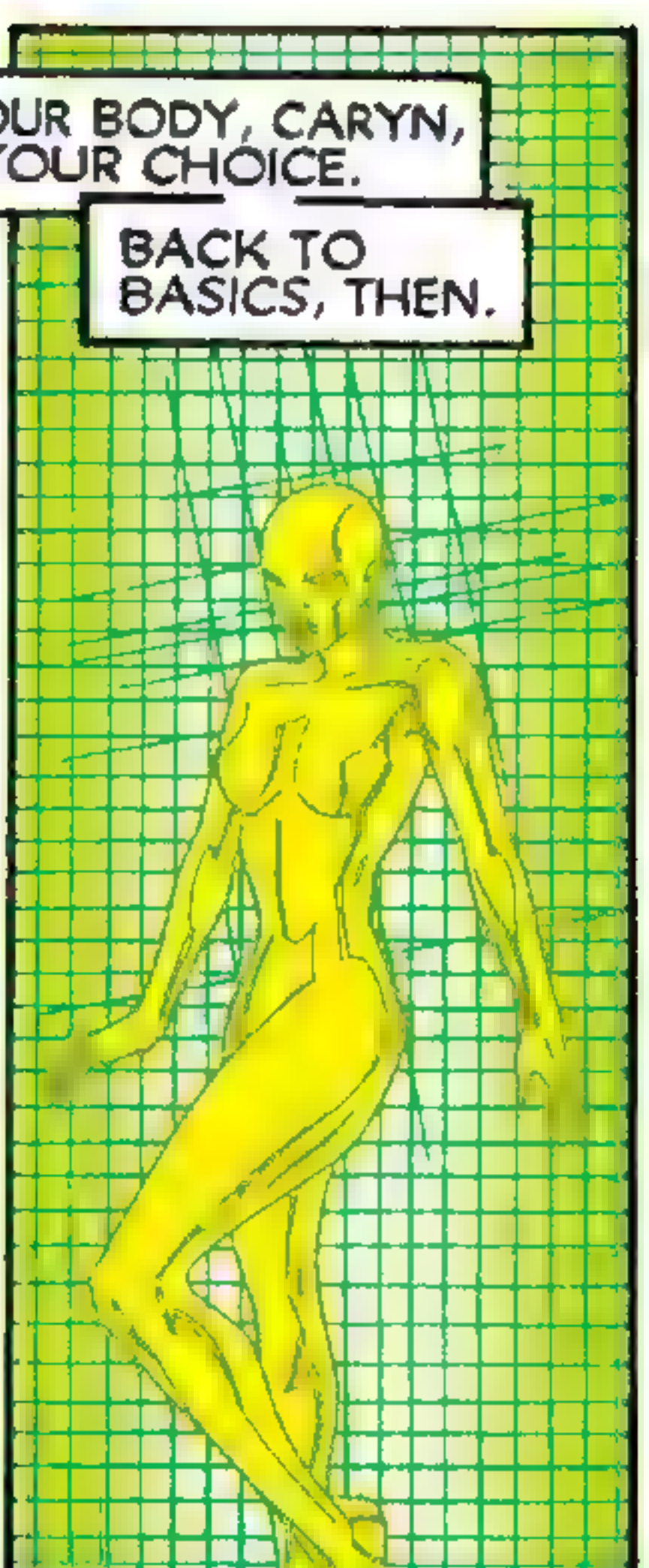


A LITTLE... *TOO* UNIQUE FOR MY TASTES. I'M SORRY.



YOUR BODY, CARYN, YOUR CHOICE.

BACK TO BASICS, THEN.



WAIT! THAT FACE!

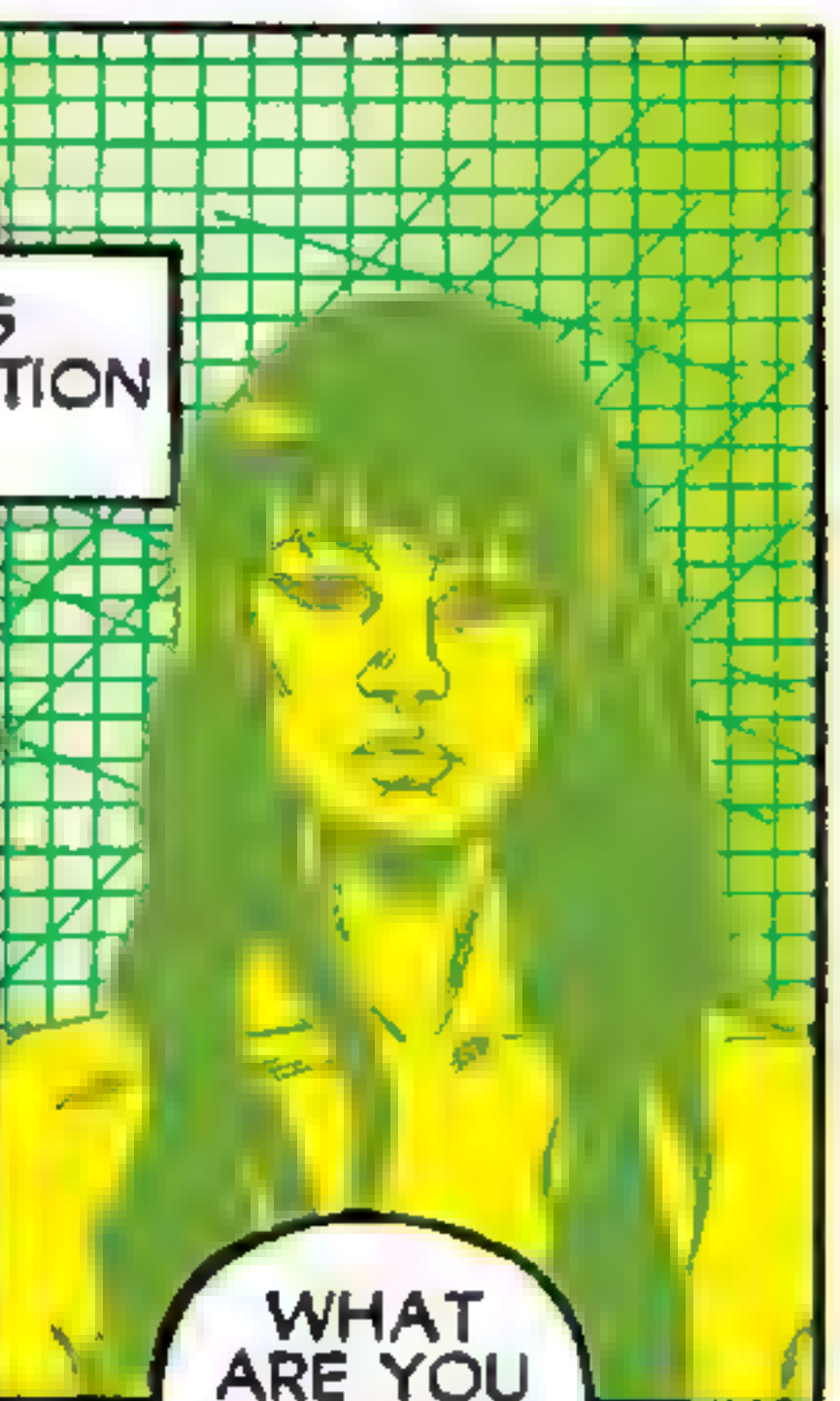
GO BACK, PLEASE! YOU'RE SCROLLING TOO FAST! I SAW SOMETHING I WANT!



IT'S IDENT NUMBER 3-I-8-- MY GOD, HAVE I SEEN THAT *MANY* TODAY?!

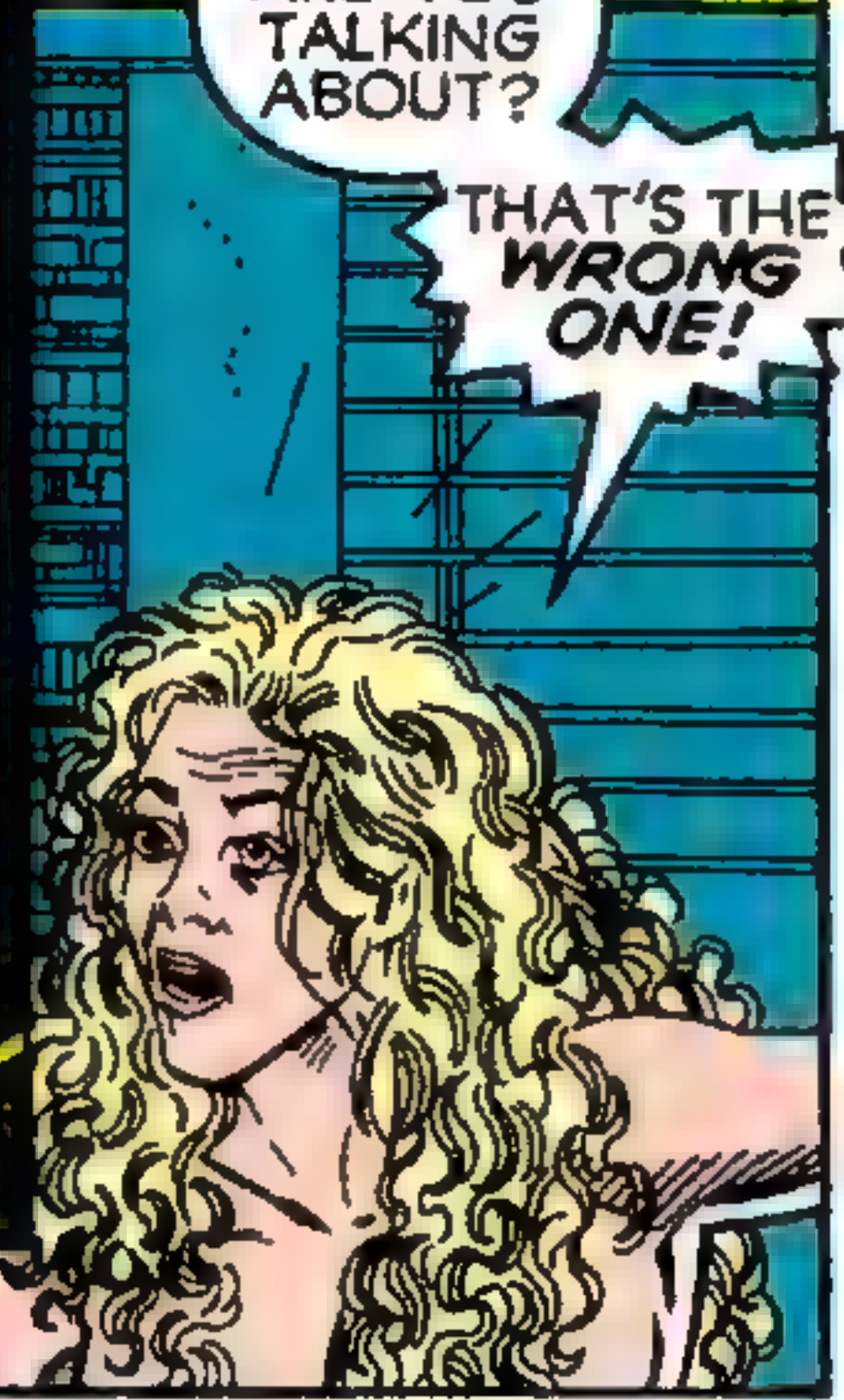


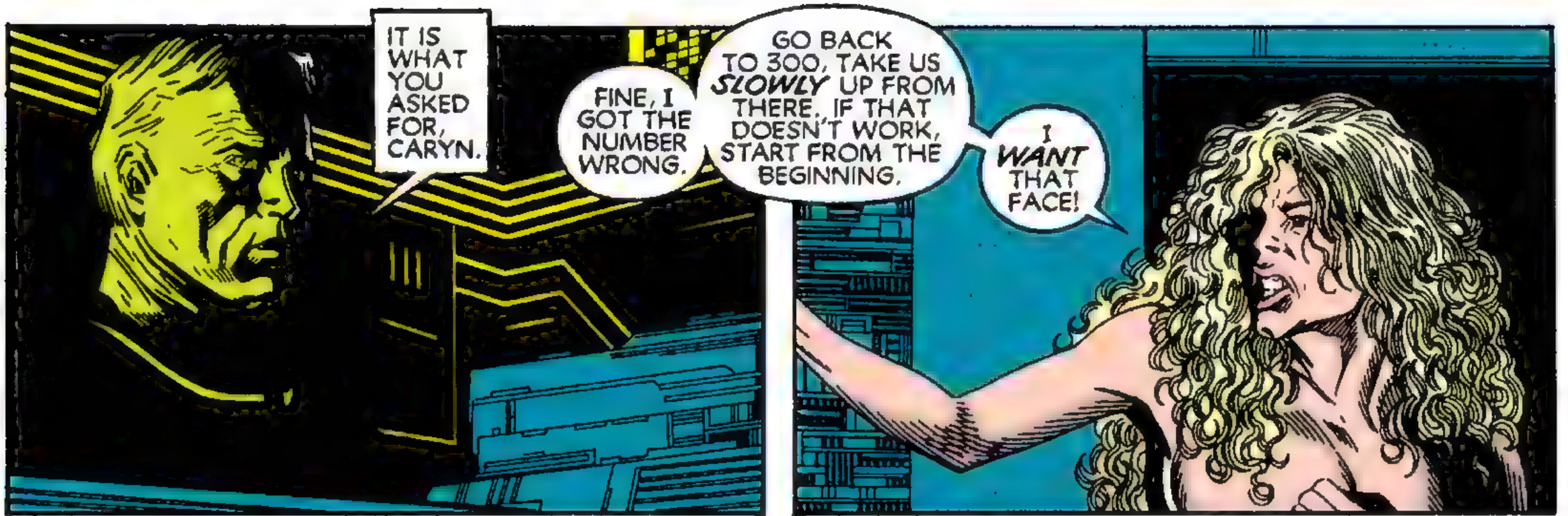
DISPLAYING CONFIGURATION 3-I-8.



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

THAT'S THE *WRONG* ONE!



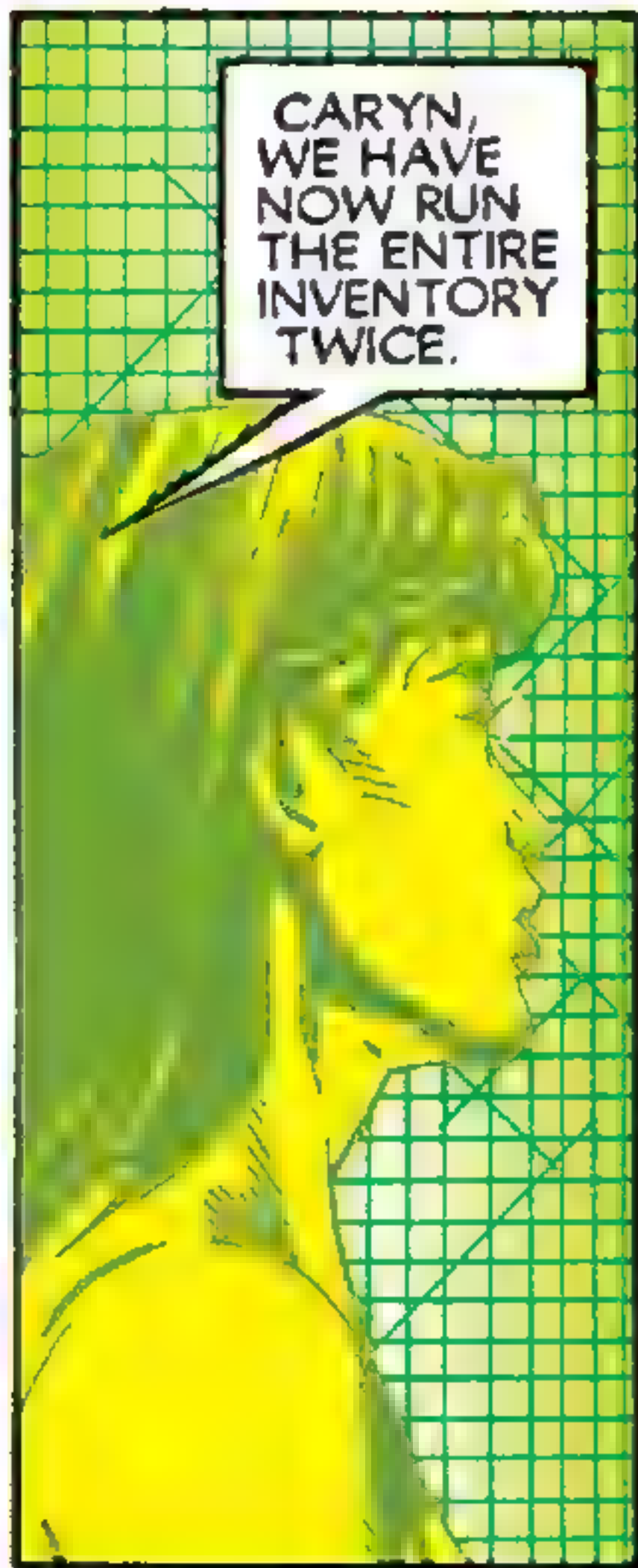


IT IS WHAT YOU ASKED FOR, CARYN.

FINE, I GOT THE NUMBER WRONG.

GO BACK TO 300, TAKE US *SLOWLY* UP FROM THERE. IF THAT DOESN'T WORK, START FROM THE BEGINNING.

I WANT THAT FACE!



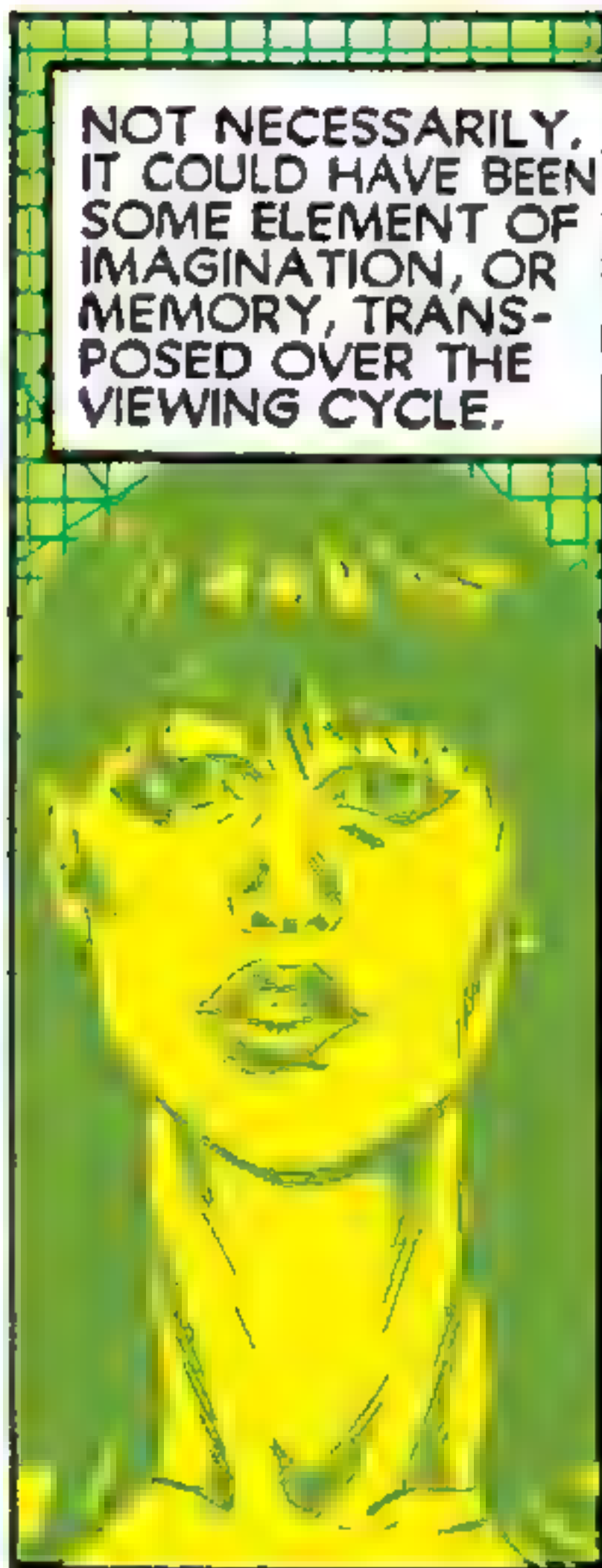
CARYN, WE HAVE NOW RUN THE ENTIRE INVENTORY TWICE.



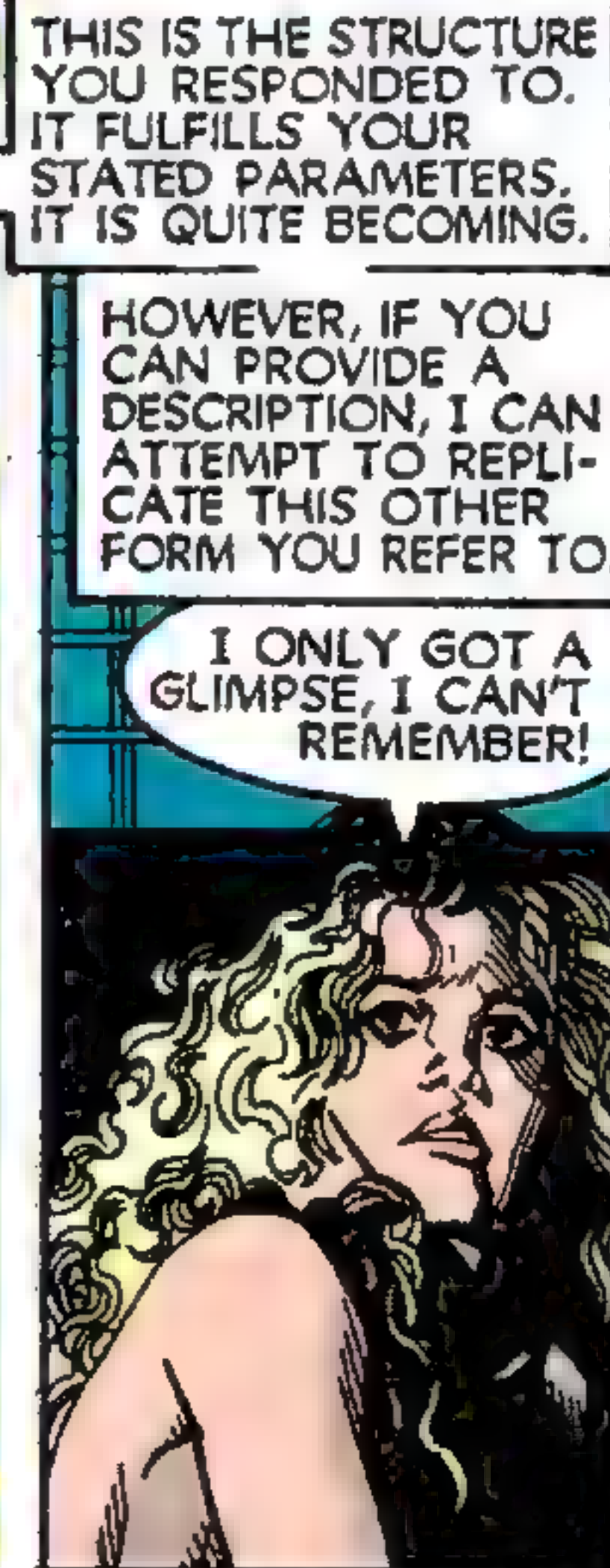
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

I KNOW WHAT I SAW.

IT'S GOT TO BE HERE!



NOT NECESSARILY. IT COULD HAVE BEEN SOME ELEMENT OF IMAGINATION, OR MEMORY, TRANSPOSED OVER THE VIEWING CYCLE.



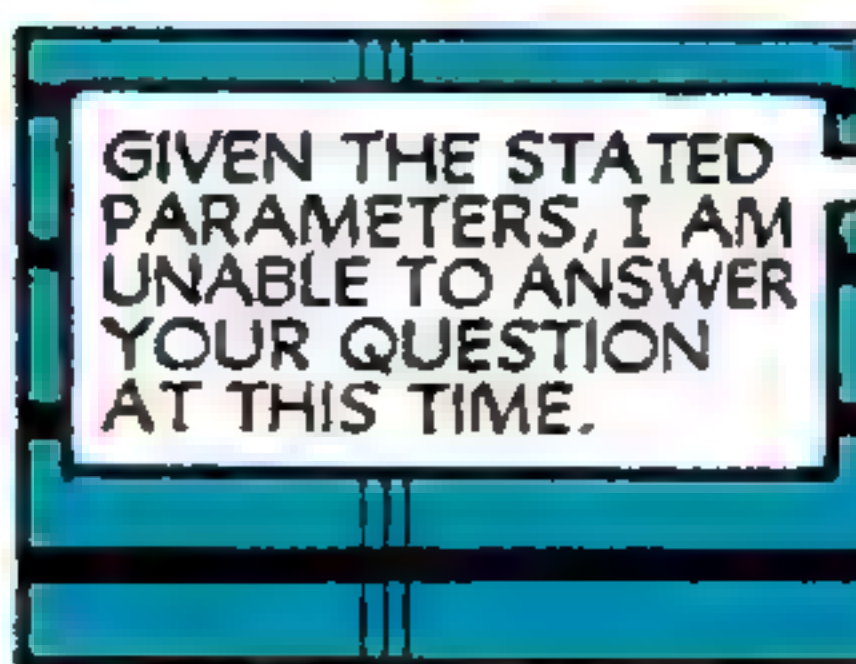
THIS IS THE STRUCTURE YOU RESPONDED TO. IT FULFILLS YOUR STATED PARAMETERS. IT IS QUITE BECOMING.

HOWEVER, IF YOU CAN PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION, I CAN ATTEMPT TO REPLICATE THIS OTHER FORM YOU REFER TO.

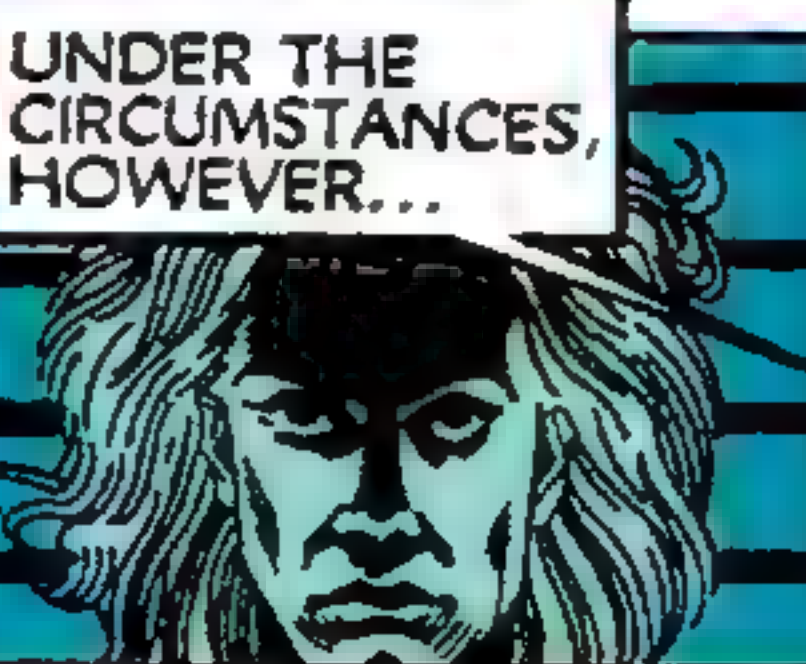
I ONLY GOT A GLIMPSE, I CAN'T REMEMBER!



WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME, TOY?! WHY DO I KEEP SEEING THAT FACE?! WHY DOES IT MAKE ME SO *AFRAID*?



GIVEN THE STATED PARAMETERS, I AM UNABLE TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION AT THIS TIME.



UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, HOWEVER...



...I PERCEIVE NO RATIONAL JUSTIFICATION FOR YOUR APPREHENSION.



I'M *IRRATIONAL*, THEN!

THERE IS NO REASON.



NOR ANY TO BE AFRAID.

BUT MY *NIGHTMARES*, TOY!



THIS SENSE THAT SOMETHING'S *HUNTING* ME!



GIVEN TIME, CARYN, I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT A PERFECTLY LOGICAL EXPLANATION WILL PRESENT ITSELF.

FOR NOW, HOWEVER, YOU ARE IN THE *SAFEST* OF HANDS.

AS YOU CAST OFF THIS OLD SKIN, CAST OFF ITS CARES AS WELL.

TRUST ME, CARYN.



WITH MY *LIFE*, TOY.

JUST LIKE ALWAYS.

I SHOULDN'T
FEEL LIKE THIS.

TROPHIES CHANGE THEIR
SKIN ALMOST AS OFTEN
AS THEIR CLOTHES, OUR
GENETICALLY ENGINEERED
MUTABILITY IS ONE OF
OUR "SELLING" POINTS.

BUT THOUGH IT'S A
CUSTOM DESIGN, MY NEW
BODY JUST WON'T FIT.

MITCHELL!
WHY'S IT
SO COLD?

I FEEL AS OUT OF PLACE
AS SHARI LOOKS, WEARING
MY OLD LIKENESS.

I WONDER HOW MUCH
IT HAS TO DO WITH THAT
STRANGE MATRIX I KEEP
SEEING. SUCH AN
ORDINARY WOMAN,
NOTHING SPECTACULAR
AT ALL; HER FACE IS LINED.

SHARI'S WHINE DOESN'T
REGISTER AT FIRST. I
HADN'T NOTICED THE
CHILL, I NEVER DO.

BUT THAT
ISN'T ALL.

MITCHELL, THE
WINDOW--!

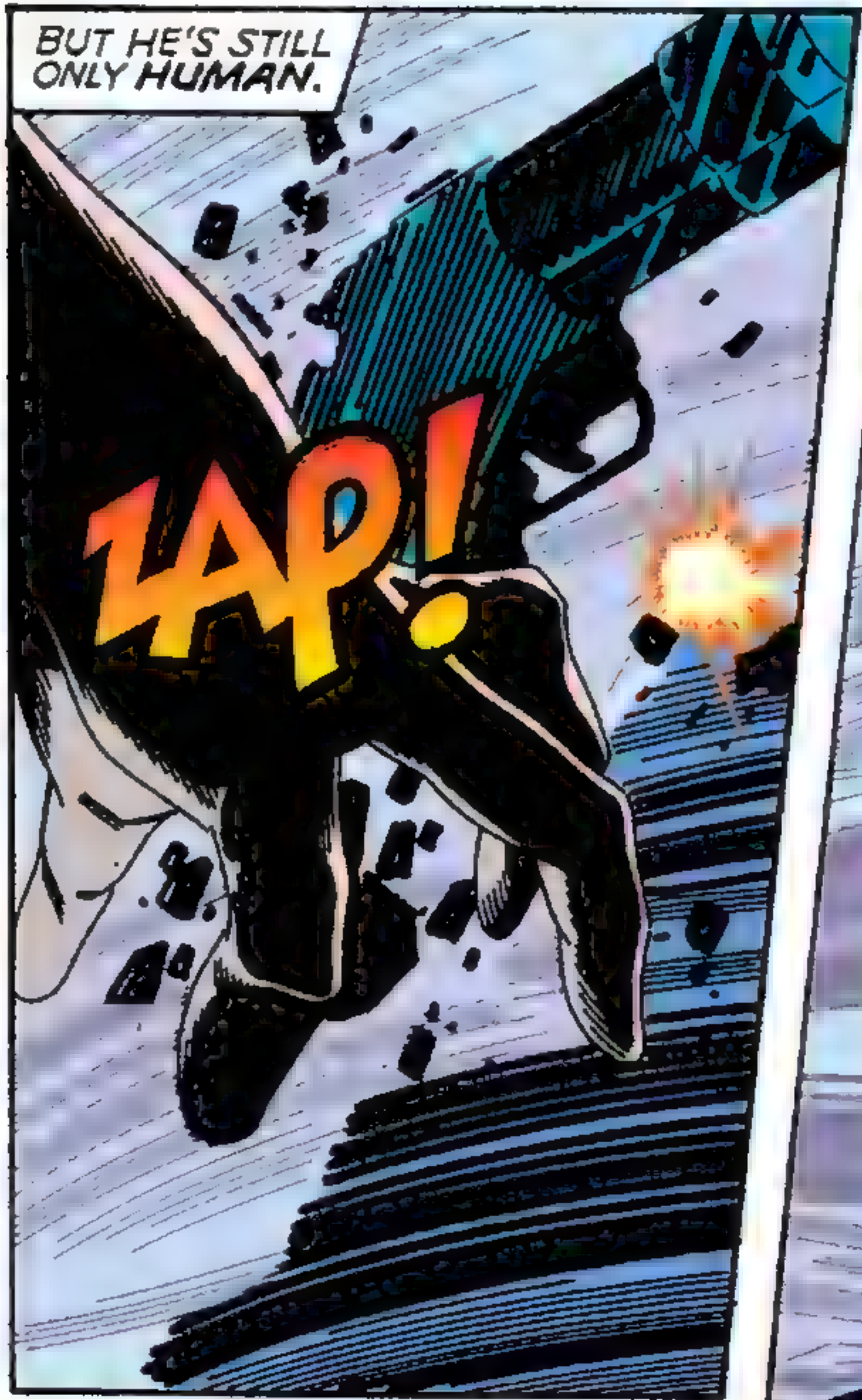
A SCARLET LIGHT
FLASHES FROM
DEEP WITHIN THE
FOG. I FEEL FAINT
PINPRICKS OF HEAT
ON MY FOREHEAD.

TARGETING
LASER!

CARYN--
SHARI--
GET
DOWN!

MITCHELL'S VERY GOOD--
MONTCALM-DEACROIX ONLY
EMPLOYS THE BEST-- WITH
BIONIC ENHANCEMENTS
SPECIFIC TO THE TRADE
OF BODYGUARD.

HE HAS HIS
GUN OUT
ALMOST
FASTER
THAN THE
EYE CAN
FOLLOW.



BUT HE'S STILL ONLY HUMAN.



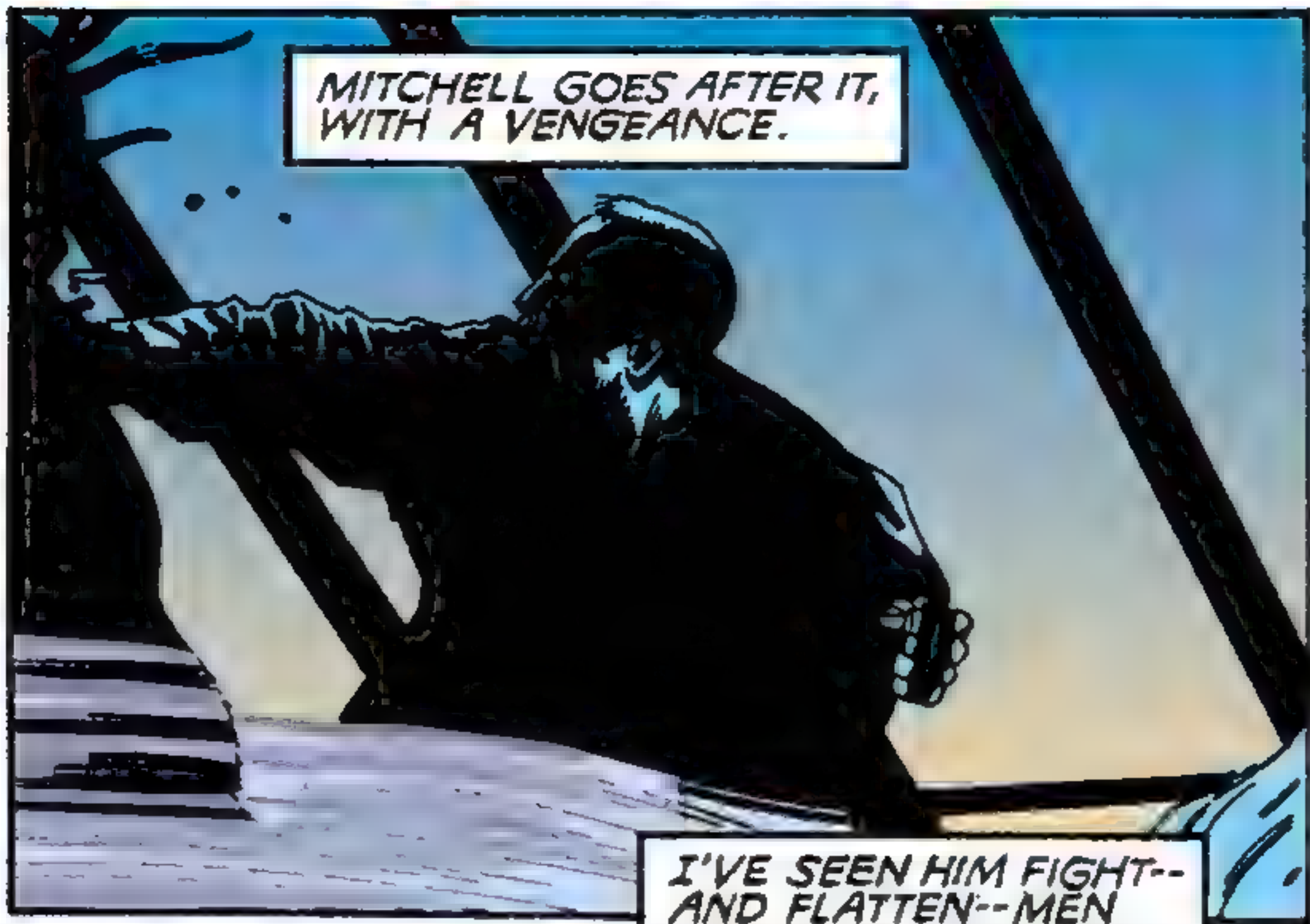
AS THE SIGHTING TREFOIL LOCKS ONTO MITCHELL...

... I FIND MYSELF REACTING TO SAVE HIM.

THE DECK CHAIR'S THE ONLY WEAPON AT HAND.

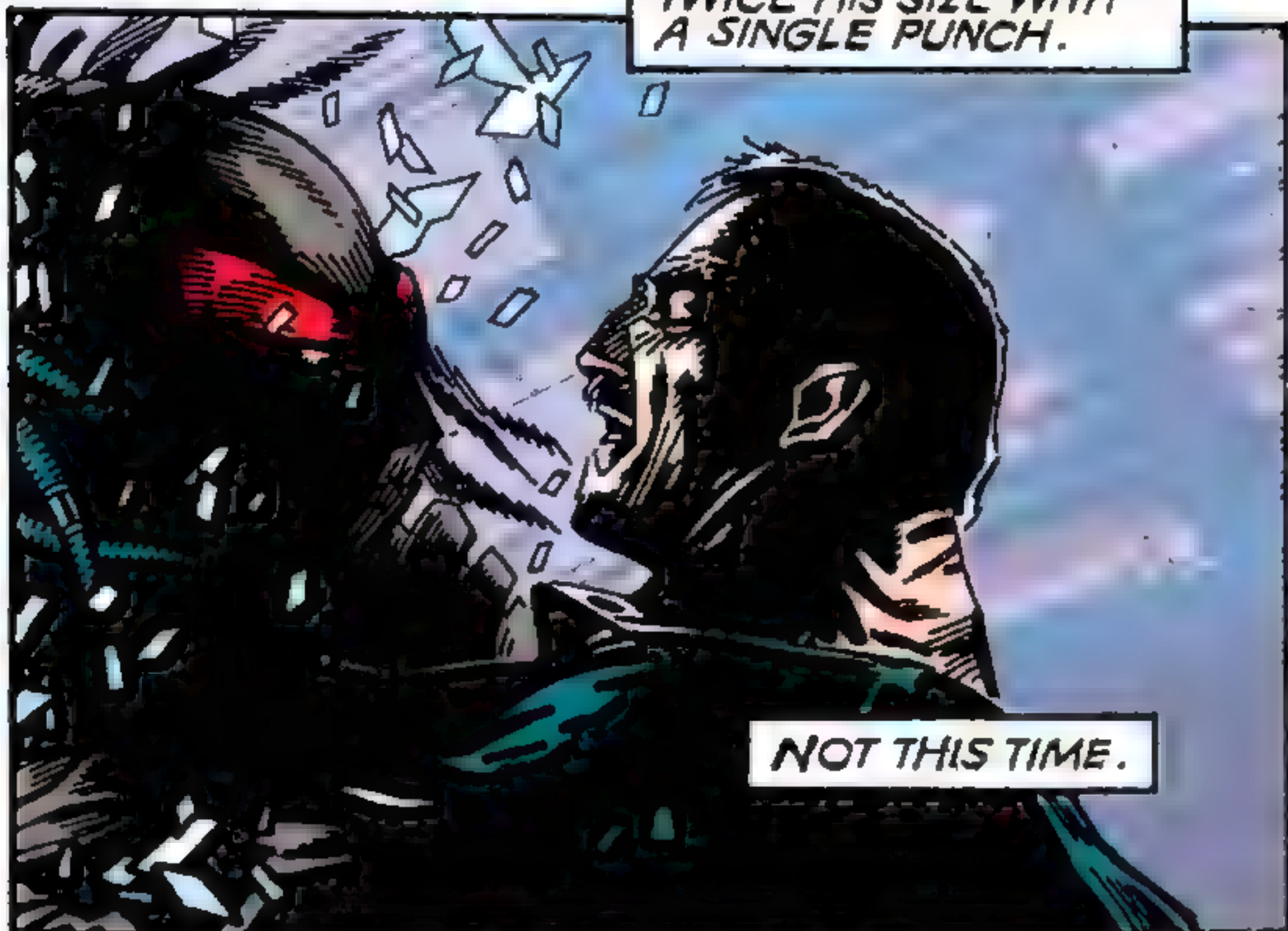
TO MY AMAZEMENT, I HIT SOMETHING.

IT ISN'T AMUSED.

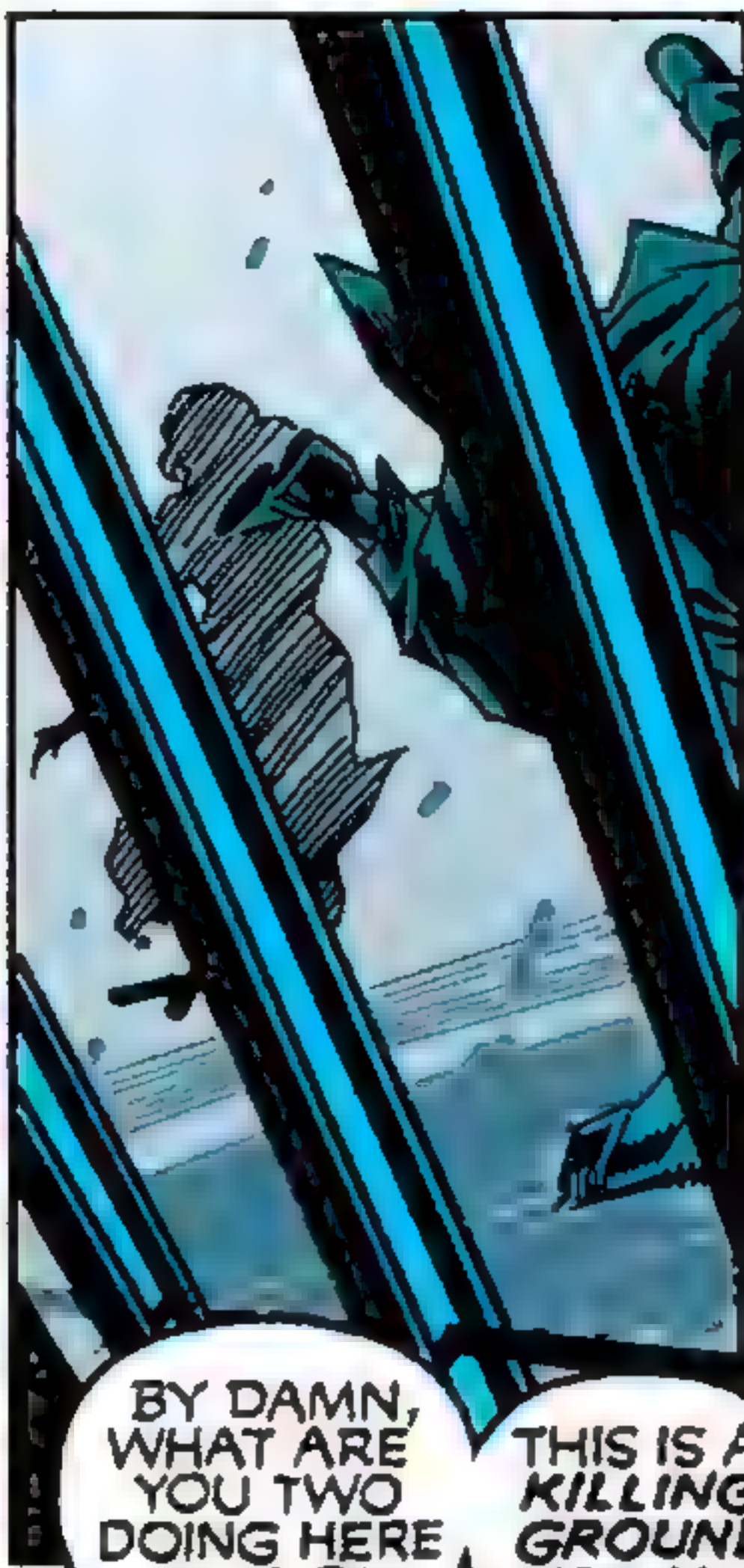


MITCHELL GOES AFTER IT, WITH A VENGEANCE.

I'VE SEEN HIM FIGHT-- AND FLATTEN-- MEN TWICE HIS SIZE WITH A SINGLE PUNCH.



NOT THIS TIME.



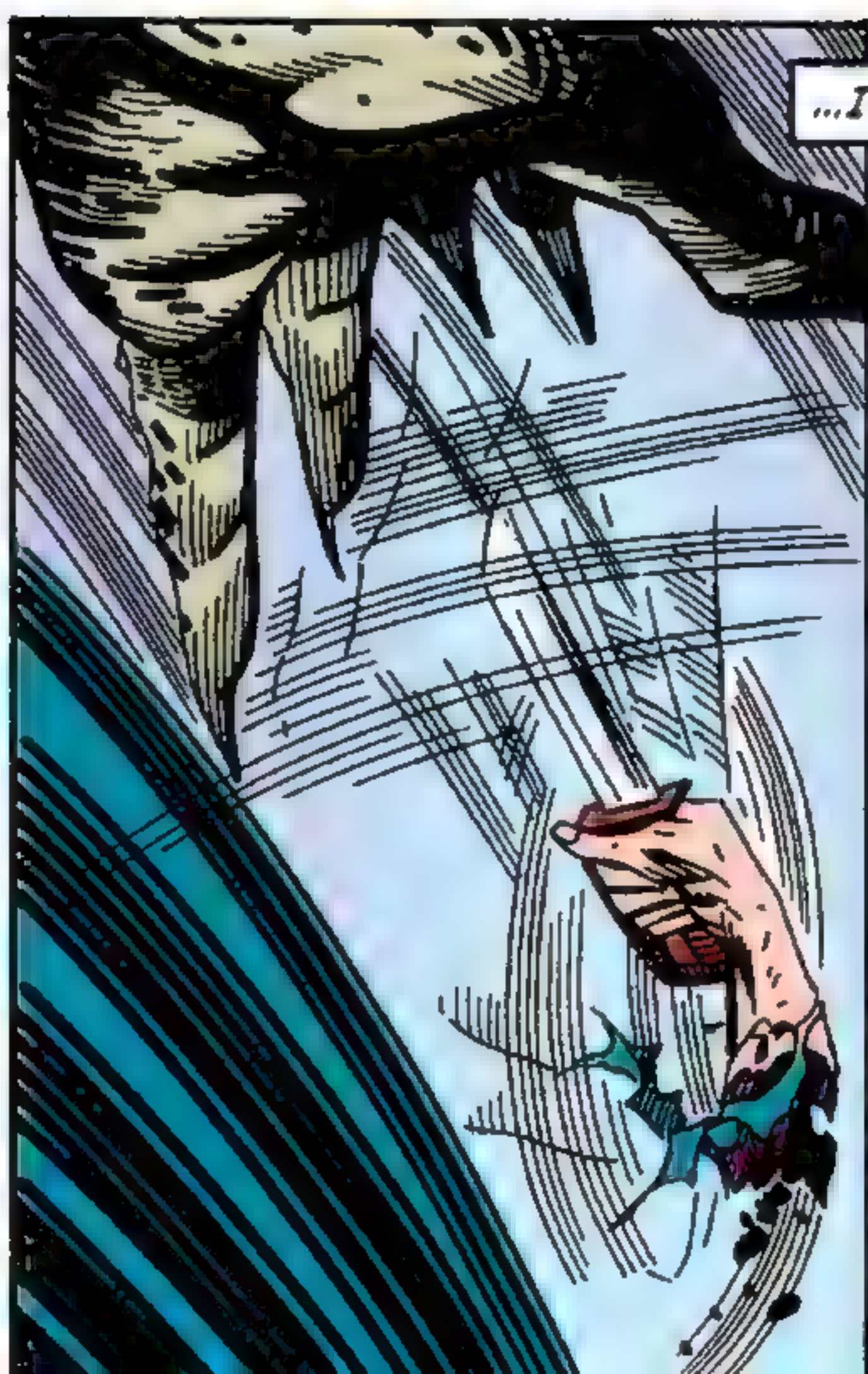
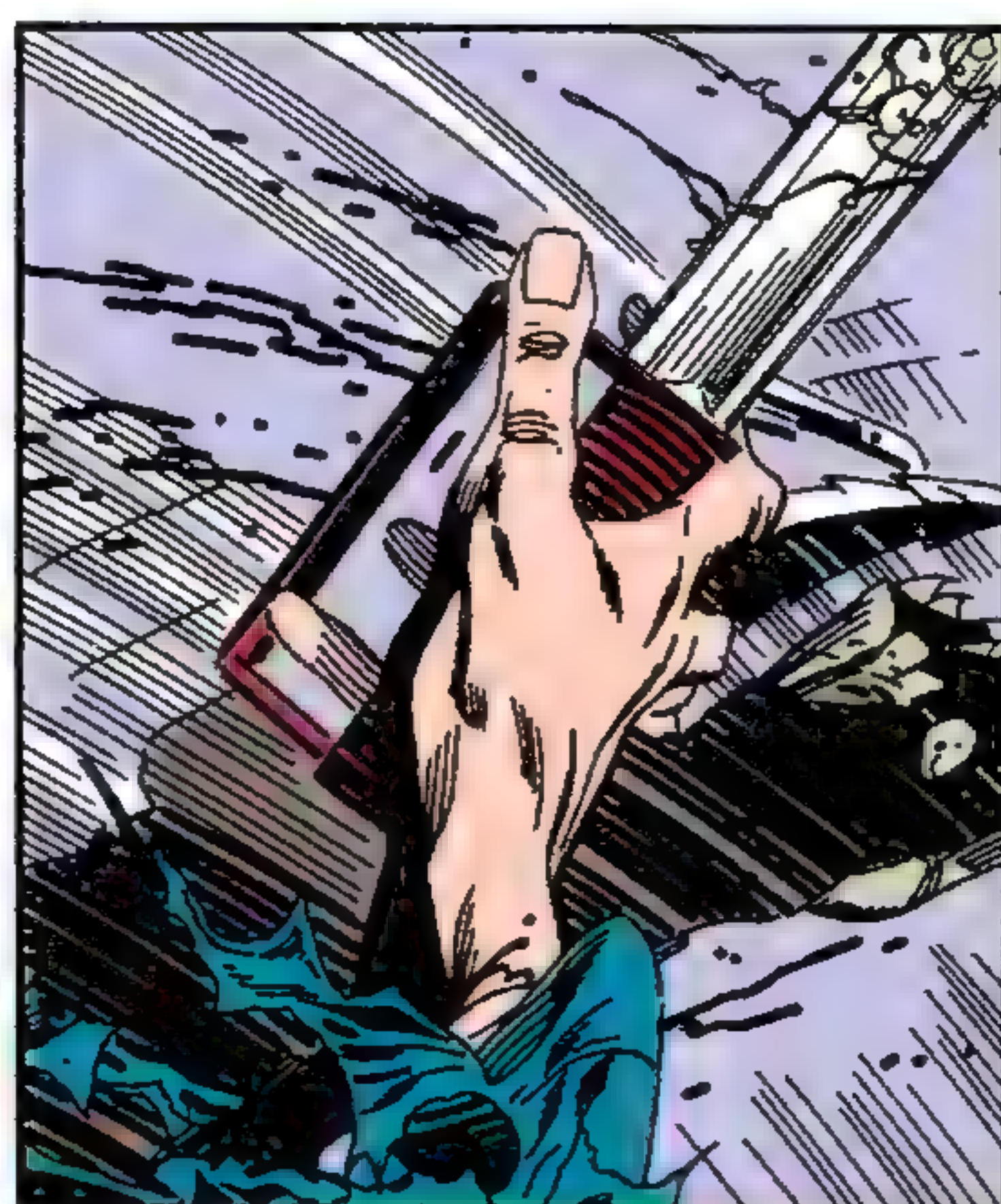
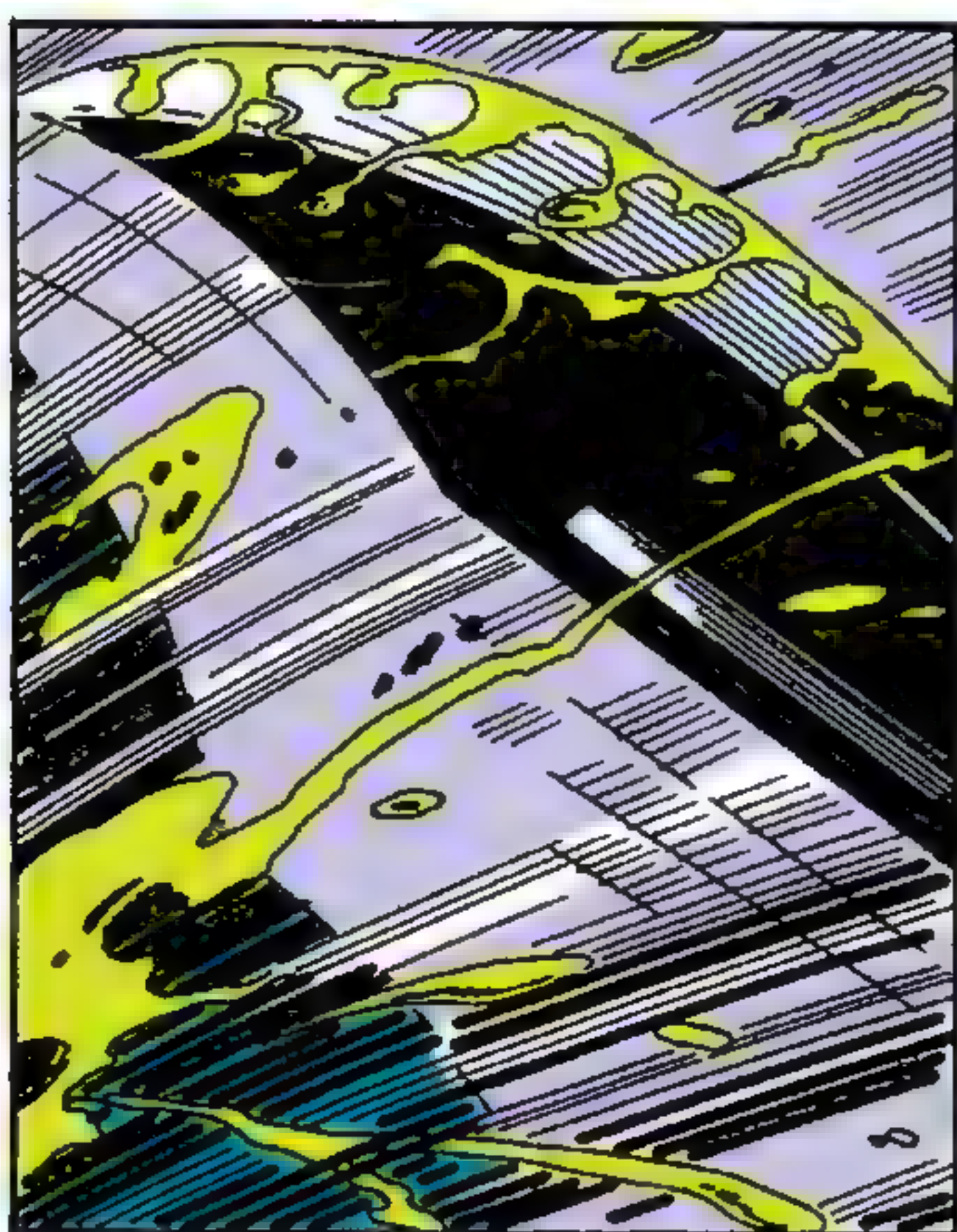
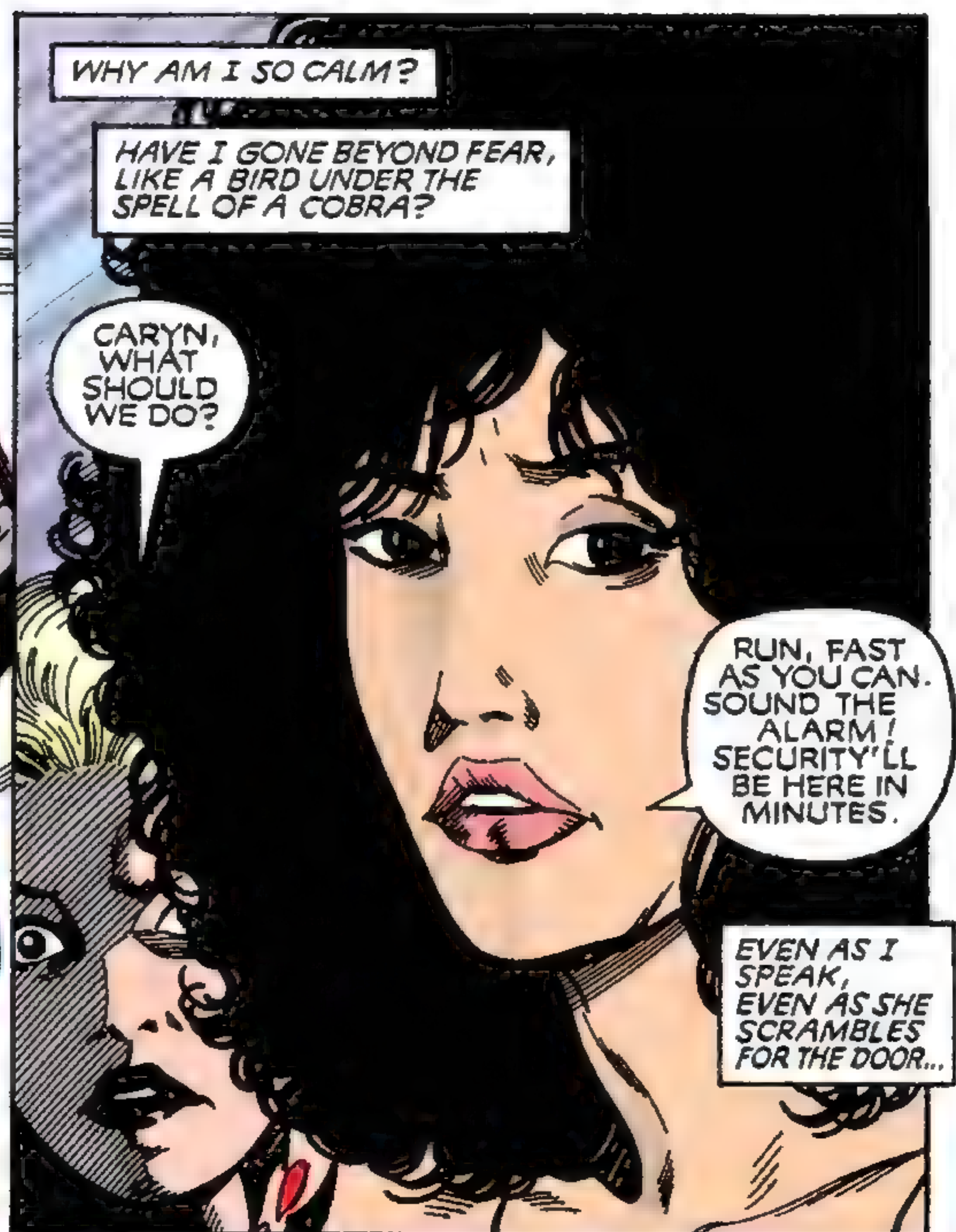
BY DAMN, WHAT ARE YOU TWO DOING HERE STILL ?!

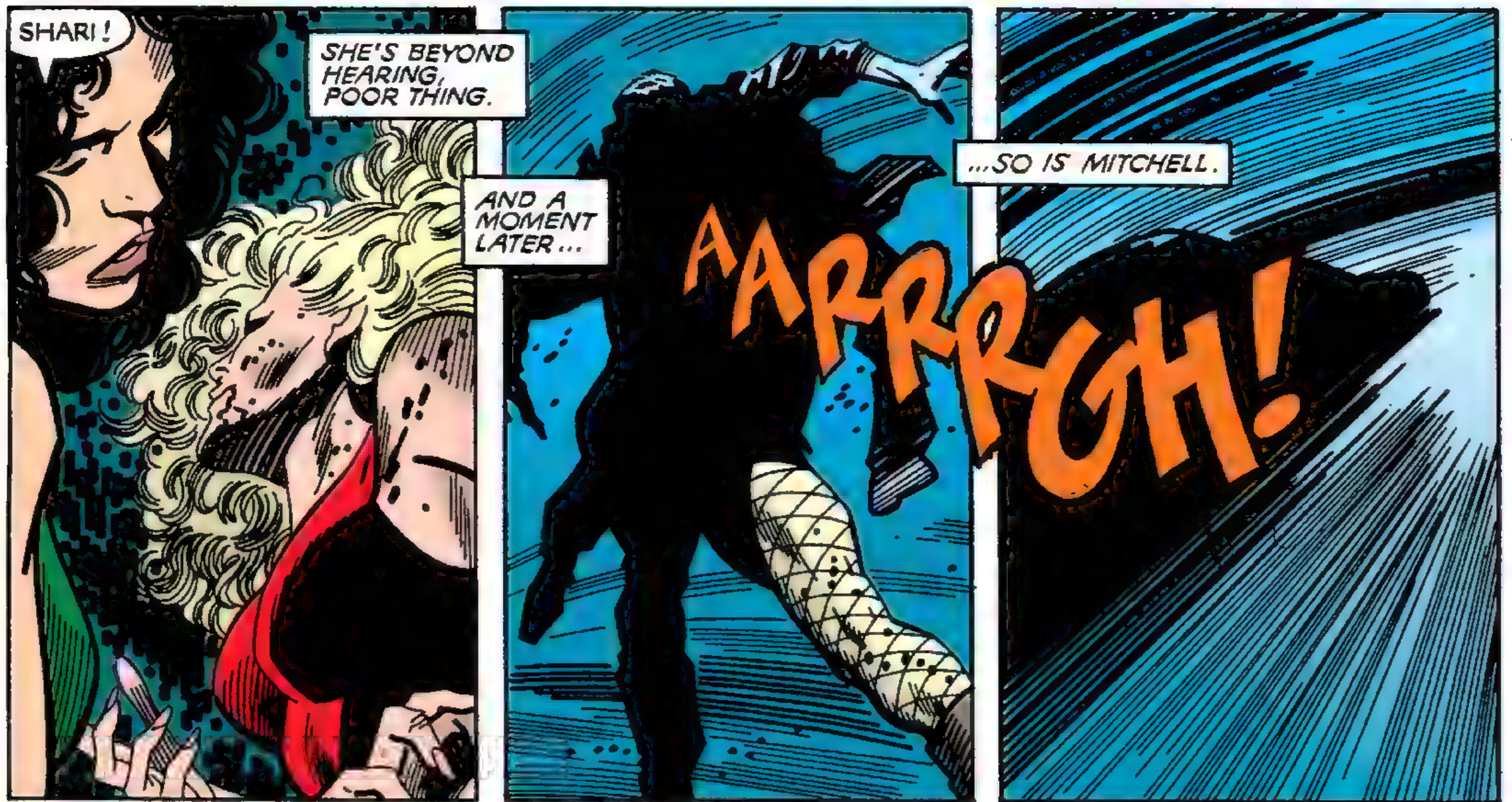
THIS IS A KILLING GROUND, WOMAN!

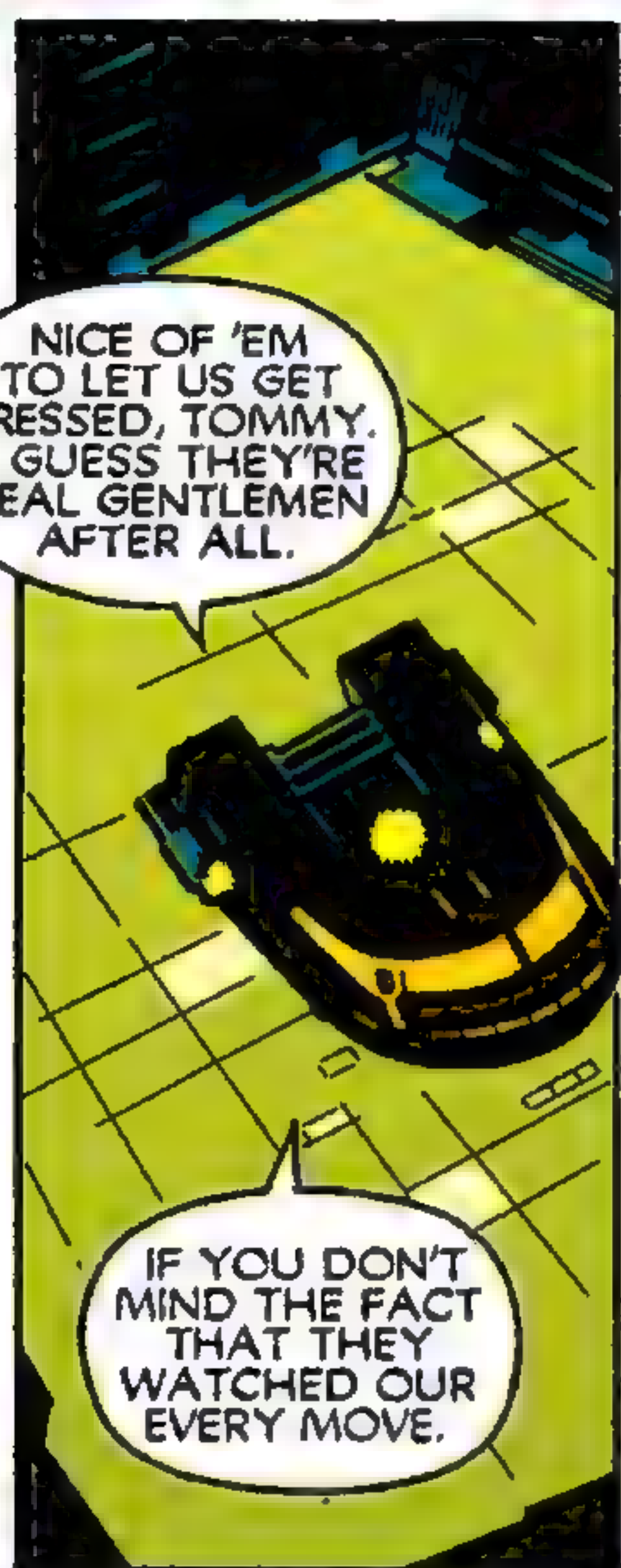
GET OUT OF HERE, NOW!

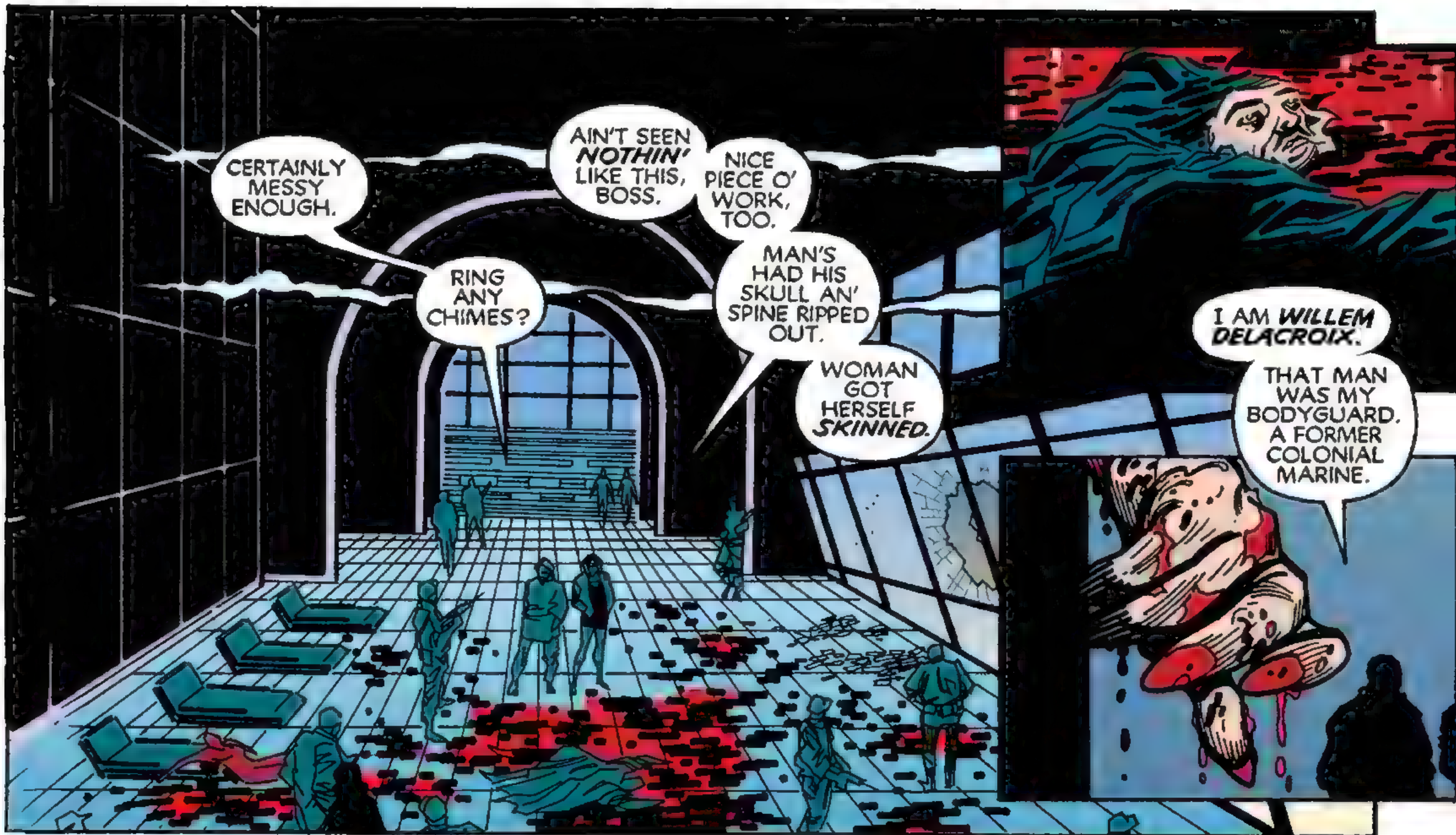


I'LL HOLD THIS BASTARD, BEST I CAN! GO!









CERTAINLY
MESSY
ENOUGH.

AIN'T SEEN
NOTHIN'
LIKE THIS,
BOSS.

NICE
PIECE O'
WORK,
TOO.

RING
ANY
CHIMES?

MAN'S
HAD HIS
SKULL AN'
SPINE RIPPED
OUT.

WOMAN
GOT
HERSELF
SKINNED.

I AM **WILLEM
DELACROIX.**

THAT MAN
WAS MY
BODYGUARD.
A FORMER
COLONIAL
MARINE.

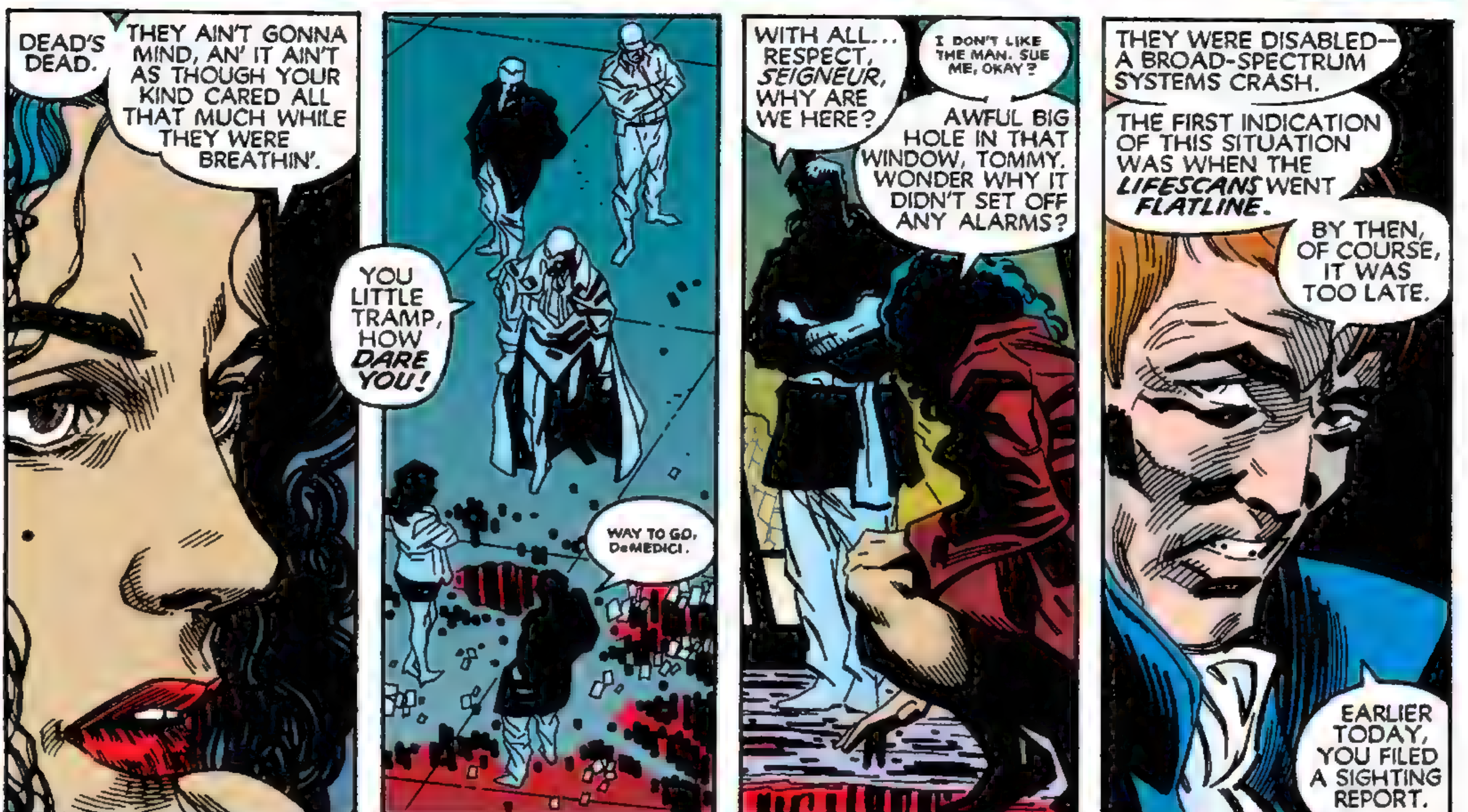


WALK SOFT, MARIA.
HIS **CHICHI-SAN'S**
TOP OF THE
CORPORATE
PYRAMID.

I REMEMBER
THE FACE--
HIM AND THE
BRUISER
BOTH.

SHOULD'A
FIGURED THAT
BABOOTH FOR A
JARHEAD--MORE
BRAWN THAN
BRAIN.

TWO PEOPLE HAVE
BEEN BUTCHERED
HERE, MISSY. SHOW
SOME RESPECT!



DEAD'S
DEAD.

THEY AIN'T GONNA
MIND, AN' IT AIN'T
AS THOUGH YOUR
KIND CARED ALL
THAT MUCH WHILE
THEY WERE
BREATHIN'.

YOU
LITTLE
TRAMP,
HOW
DARE
YOU!

WAY TO GO,
DeMEDICI.

WITH ALL...
RESPECT,
SEIGNEUR,
WHY ARE
WE HERE?

I DON'T LIKE
THE MAN. SUE
ME, OKAY?

AWFUL BIG
HOLE IN THAT
WINDOW, TOMMY.
WONDER WHY IT
DIDN'T SET OFF
ANY ALARMS?

THEY WERE DISABLED--
A BROAD-SPECTRUM
SYSTEMS CRASH.

THE FIRST INDICATION
OF THIS SITUATION
WAS WHEN THE
LIFESCAPS WENT
FLATLINE.

BY THEN,
OF COURSE,
IT WAS
TOO LATE.

EARLIER
TODAY,
YOU FILED
A SIGHTING
REPORT.



TOLD YOU THAT'D BE TROUBLE, TOMMY.
NOBODY EVER LISTENS TO ME.



IT WAS IN THE VICINITY OF THE OFFICE OF DR. ERIK JOHANNES.
WE HAD NOTHING DEFINITE, A GHOST CONTACT AT BEST.



YOUR "GHOST" HAS SLAUGHTERED THREE PEOPLE. WE FOUND JOHANNES, LOOKING MUCH LIKE THIS!



WANNA KNOW WHAT I'M THINKIN', TOMMY?
THIS COULD'A BEEN US.
ABSOLUTELY.



DAMN YOU BOTH, I WANT ANSWERS!



ALL WE KNOW, WE PUT IN THE SIGHTING REPORT.
WASN'T A "BUG" THAT DID THIS, WE'LL TELL YOU THAT FOR FREE.



WE'RE NOT SECURITY, SEIGNEUR. THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN OFFER HERE.



YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. THERE WERE THREE PEOPLE ON THIS DECK.

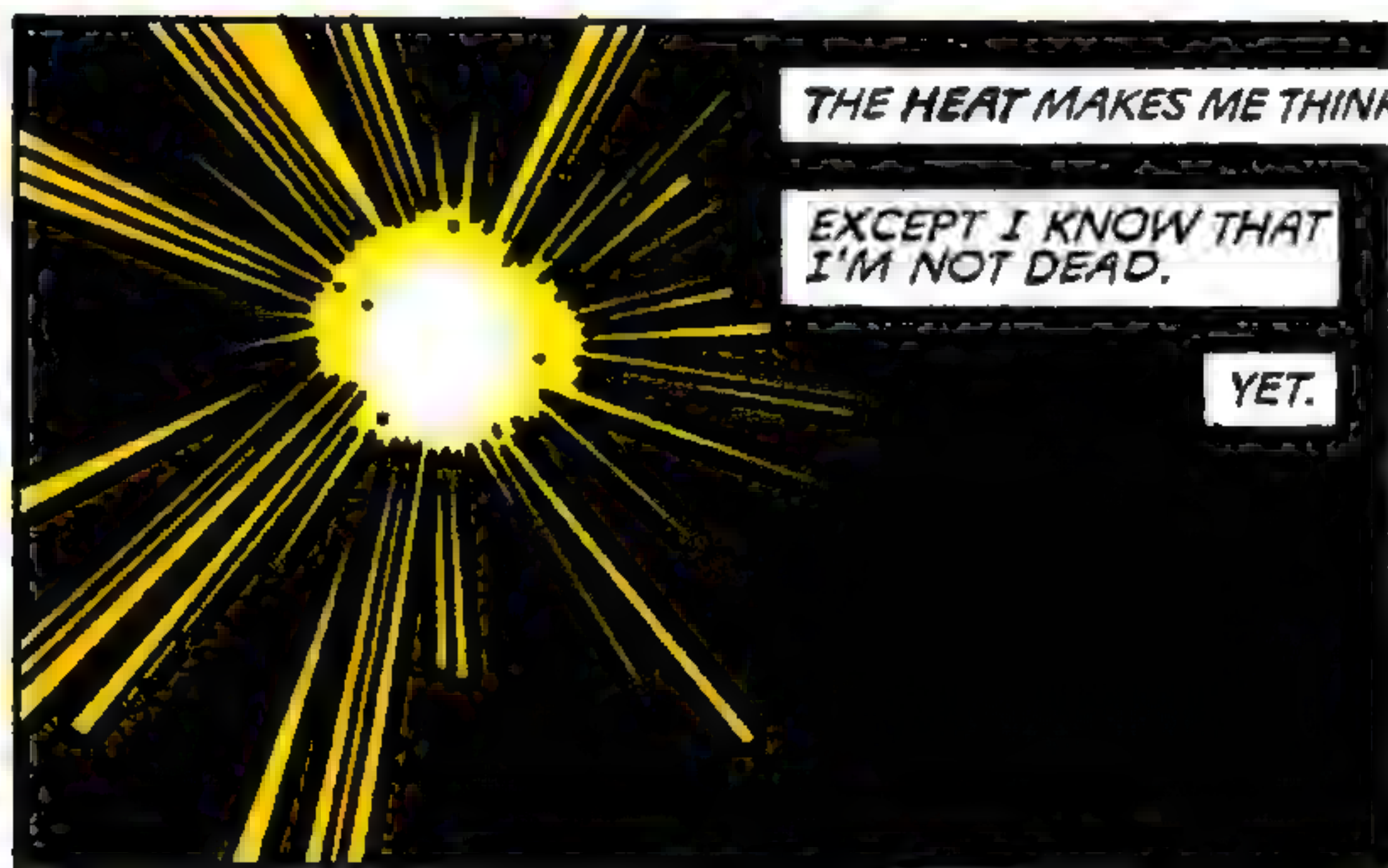
TWO WERE MURDERED. BUT THE THIRD-- MY FATHER'S TROPHY WIFE-- HAS VANISHED.



WITHOUT A TRACE.



TOO BAD. SHE'D'A BEEN LUCKIER TO END UP LIKE THIS.



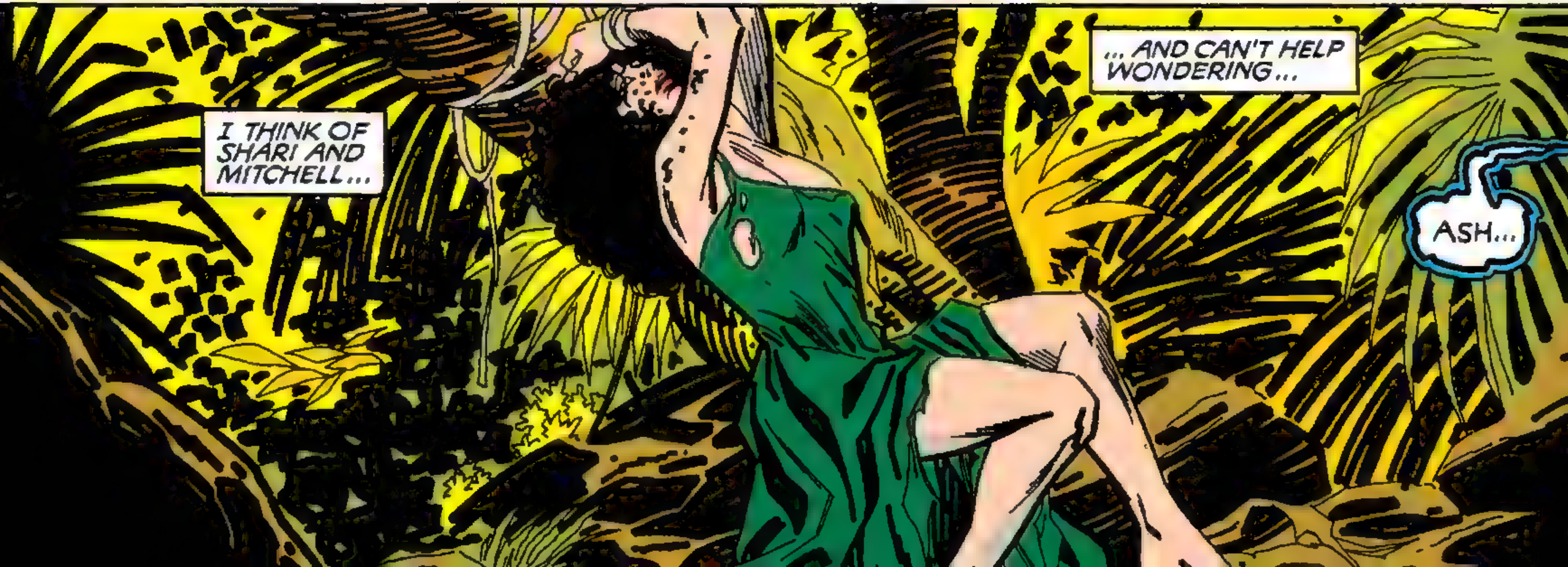
THE HEAT MAKES ME THINK OF HELL.

EXCEPT I KNOW THAT I'M NOT DEAD.

YET.



WORSE BY FAR, I KNOW AT LAST THIS IS NO DREAM.



I THINK OF SHARI AND MITCHELL...

... AND CAN'T HELP WONDERING ...

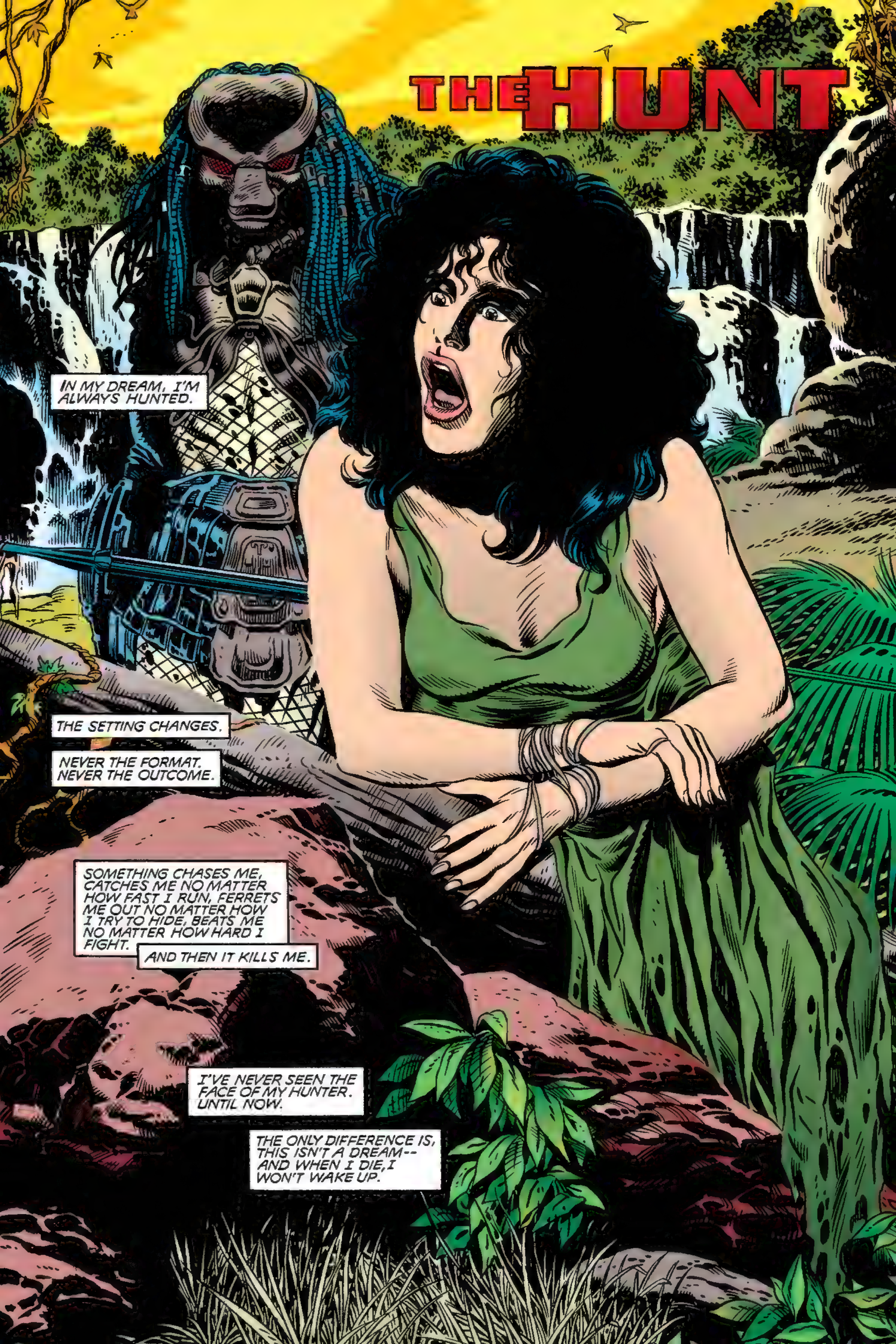
ASH...

... HOW LONG BEFORE
THE SAME THING
HAPPENS TO ME?

ASH...
PARNALL!



THE HUNT



IN MY DREAM, I'M
ALWAYS HUNTED.

THE SETTING CHANGES.

NEVER THE FORMAT.
NEVER THE OUTCOME.

SOMETHING CHASES ME,
CATCHES ME NO MATTER
HOW FAST I RUN, FERRETS
ME OUT NO MATTER HOW
I TRY TO HIDE, BEATS ME
NO MATTER HOW HARD I
FIGHT.

AND THEN IT KILLS ME.

I'VE NEVER SEEN THE
FACE OF MY HUNTER.
UNTIL NOW.

THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS,
THIS ISN'T A DREAM--
AND WHEN I DIE, I
WON'T WAKE UP.

IN MY WHOLE LIFE, I'VE NEVER WALKED ON THE GROUND.

THE ALIENS LIVED ON THE GROUND. EVEN THOUGH THEY'VE BEEN DRIVEN FROM THE EARTH, THE OLD FEARS REMAIN. THAT'S WHY WE LIVE IN THE SKY, WHERE IT'S SAFE.

THIS CREATURE DOESN'T SEEM TO CARE.

IT'S SO HOT, I CAN'T HELP THINKING OF HELL.

AND WONDERING IF I'M FACE TO FACE WITH THE DEVIL.

ASH...
PARNALL
...!

THAT'S ALL
IT SAYS
TO ME.

IT ISN'T HAPPY THAT I DON'T
KNOW THE PROPER REPLY.

I WANT TO GO HOME.

I DON'T WANT TO DIE.

THERE'S BLOOD
ON MY GOWN, ON
MY FACE. IT ISN'T
MINE. NOT YET.

MITCHELL TRIED TO
PROTECT SHARI AND
ME. HE FOUGHT AS
HARD AS HE COULD.
THE CREATURE
TOOK HIS SKULL
AS A TROPHY.

AND AS FOR
SHARI...

I HOWL NOW AS I HOWLED THEN, A CRY TORN FROM SO DEEP INSIDE ME IT FEELS LIKE I'M TEARING OUT MY OWN HEART.

SHE DIED IN MY ARMS, SO AT LEAST SHE WAS BEYOND PAIN WHEN THE CREATURE BEGAN TO CUT.

I SHUT MY EYES, BUT I COULDN'T STOP MY EARS AGAINST THE SOUND OF ITS KNIFE.

WORST OF ALL WAS THE TOUCH OF HER FLESH, STILL WARM, STILL WET, AS THE CREATURE CARRIED ITS PRIZES AWAY.

IT SKINNED HER.

AND I KNOW I'M NEXT.

IT DOESN'T LIKE THE NOISE.

I LOSE CONTROL OF MY BODY, I'M SO AFRAID.

ALL I CAN THINK OF ARE THE KNIFE AND THE BLOOD.

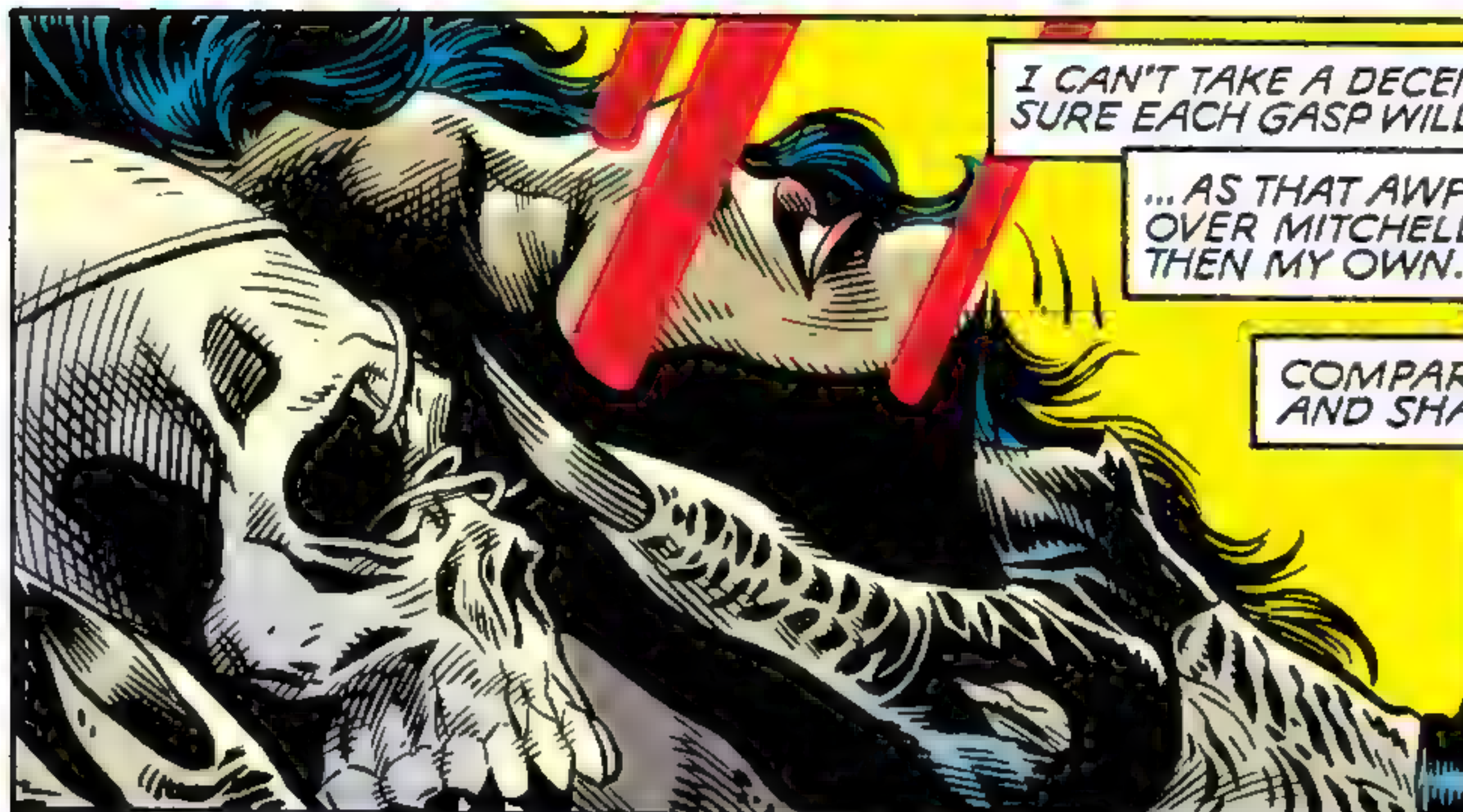
NO PLEASE NO DON'T NO PLEASE

I SAY ANYTHING THAT COMES TO MIND.

MAKE EVERY PROMISE IMAGINABLE.

I MIGHT AS WELL BE TALKING TO A STONE...

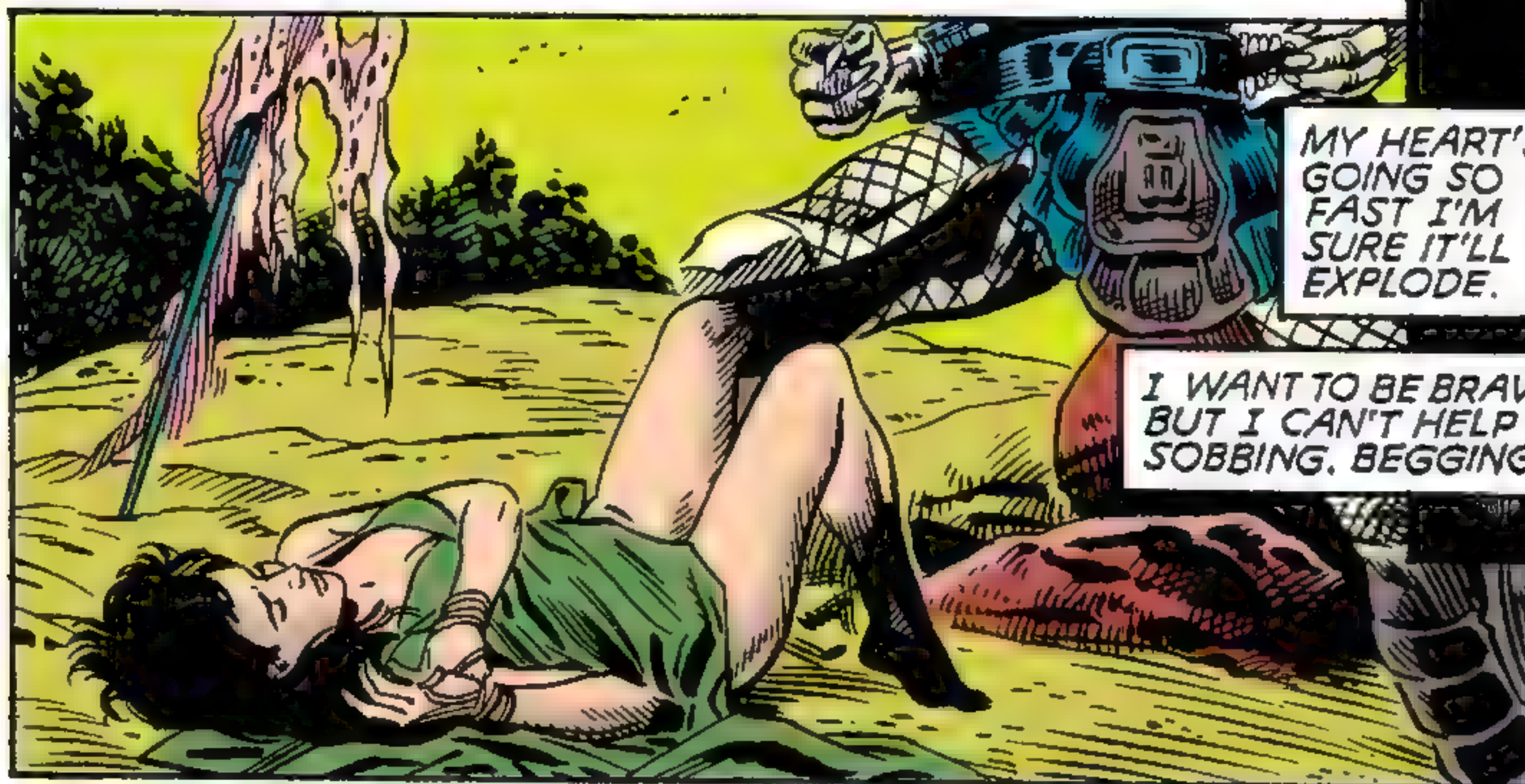
... AS ITS LASER SWINGS OUT FROM ITS SHOULDER HOUSING.



I CAN'T TAKE A DECENT BREATH,
SURE EACH GASP WILL BE MY LAST...

... AS THAT AWFUL LIGHT PLAYS
OVER MITCHELL'S SKULL AND
THEN MY OWN.

COMPARING SIZE
AND SHAPE?



MY HEART'S
GOING SO
FAST I'M
SURE IT'LL
EXPLODE.

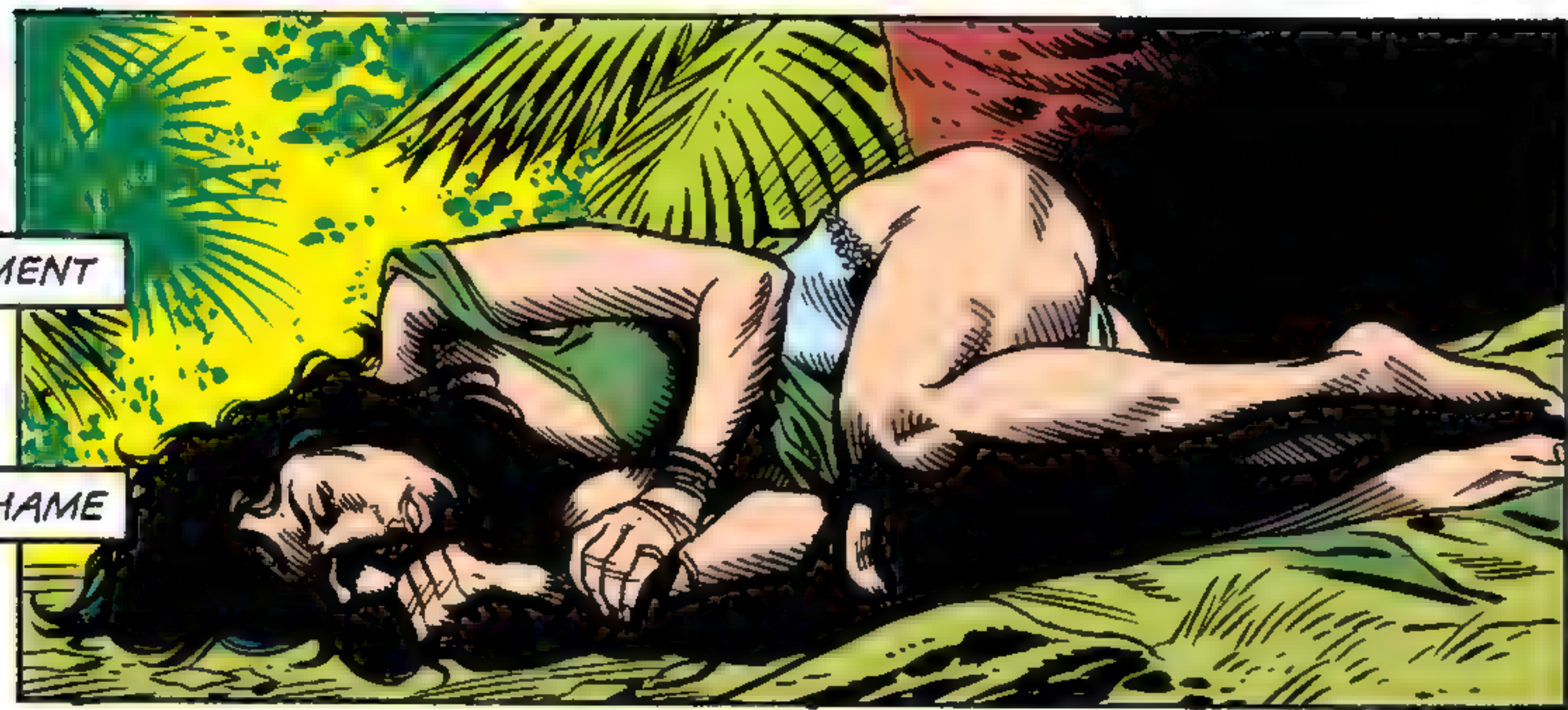
I WANT TO BE BRAVE,
BUT I CAN'T HELP
SOBBING. BEGGING.



I DON'T WANT TO DIE.
I DON'T WANT TO DIE.
MERCIFUL GOD, HEAR
MY PRAYER, I DON'T
WANT TO DIE.

TO MY AMAZEMENT

MY SHAME



MY UNBOUNDED JOY



MY TERROR



I GET MY WISH.



ELSEWHERE...

FOR THE RECORD, THIS IS THE SKYLINER *LIBERTÉ*...

...REGISTERED TERRESTRIAL CORPORATE HEAD-QUARTERS OF MONTCALM-DELACROIX *et CIE*.

PRESIDING CORPORATE OFFICER AT THIS INTERROGATION IS *WILLEM DELACROIX*, JUNIOR MEMBER OF THE BOARD.

PRESIDING INVESTIGATOR IS CORPORATE CHIEF OF SECURITY, *GISANDE SALAZAR*.

AGAIN, FOR THE RECORD, IF YOU WOULD PLEASE IDENTIFY YOURSELVES...

TOMAS SHIROW.

MARIA DeMEDICI.

THIS INTERROGATION IS PART OF AN ONGOING INQUIRY INTO THE DEATHS BY VIOLENCE EARLIER THIS EVENING OF EXECUTIVE BODYGUARD *MITCHELL LASSITER* AND EXECUTIVE COMPANION *SHARI*.

WASN'T US, CHIEF.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT-- AND THE CONSEQUENCES THEREOF-- REMAIN TO BE DETERMINED.

LEMME GUESS-- DEPENDING ON THE DEGREE OF OUR COOPERATION, AM I RIGHT?

IN ADDITION, *CARYN DELACROIX*--WIFE OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE *LUCIEN DELACROIX*--HAS DISAPPEARED. WE BELIEVE SHE MAY HAVE BEEN ABDUCTED BY WHOEVER COMMITTED THESE MURDERS.

THIS SURVEILLANCE VIDEO WAS TAKEN ON THE PROMENADE DECK.



FOR CLARIFICATION, IT HAS BEEN CONFIRMED THAT BOTH CARYN AND SHARI UNDERWENT TOTAL BODY REPLACEMENTS YESTERDAY.

MITCHELL! WHY'S IT SO COLD?

MITCHELL, THE WINDOW--!

THE WOMAN WITH THE EURASIAN PHYSIOGNOMY IS CARYN DELACROIX, WHILE SHARI EVIDENTLY CHOSE TO REPLICATE CARYN'S PREVIOUS FEATURES.

IT'S SMASHED!

THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE-- ARMORGLASS IS SUPPOSED TO BE UNBREAK--!

TARGETING LASER--!

CARYN-- SHARI-- GET DOWN!

MITCHELL WAS A SCALE-ONE OPERATIVE, A FORMER COLONIAL MARINE...

...TOP-RATED ACROSS THE BOARD, WITH BIONIC ENHANCEMENTS TO OPTIMIZE HIS PHYSICAL CAPABILITIES.

THEY DIDN'T SAVE HIM. THEY DIDN'T EVEN COME CLOSE.

MITCHELL!

SAVE YOURSELF, CARYN!

IF I'M GONNA DIE HERE...

...I WANT IT TO COUNT FOR SOMETHING!

REGRETTABLY, IT DIDN'T.

ARRGH!

THE ASSAILANT PLAINLY POSSESSES SOME KIND OF **DISTORTER** FIELD...

...THAT EFFECTIVELY CLOAKS ITS APPEARANCE FROM ANY FORM OF VISUAL OR ELECTRONIC MONITORING.

CONSEQUENTLY, WE DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO CARYN. WE CAN ONLY SURMISE HER FATE.



I'LL SAY
HERE AN' NOW
WHAT I SAID
ON YOUR
PROMENADE...

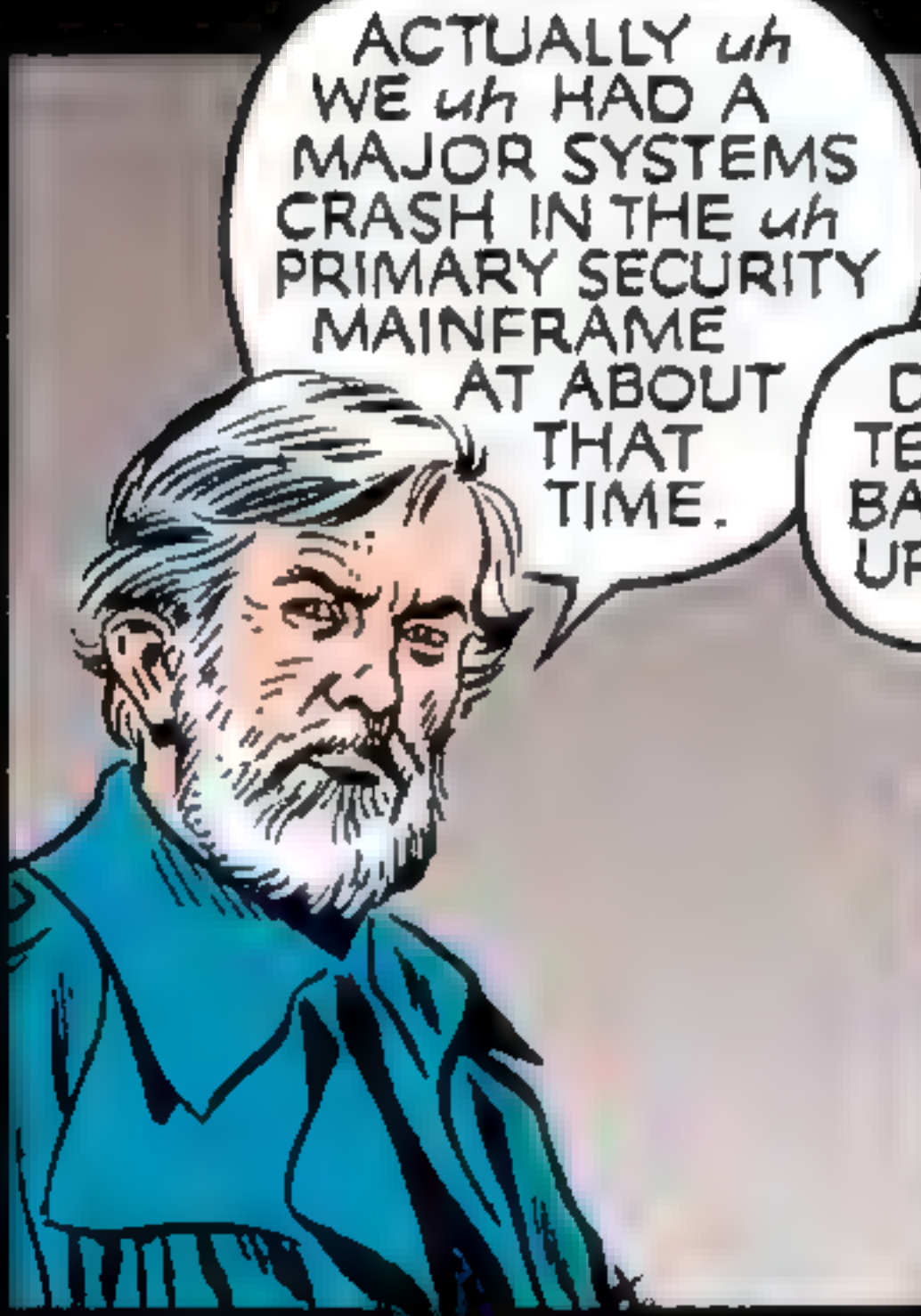
...SHE'D BE LUCKIER
TO END UP LIKE
THEM TWO.

A GHOST CONTACT, Ms. SALAZAR.
MARIA SAID SO AT THE TIME. AND
THAT WAS *HOURS* BEFORE THIS
ATTACK.

WE TOLD YOU
ALL WE KNEW
ON THE SCENE--
WHAT'S THIS TO
DO WITH US?

YOU FILED
A SIGHTING
REPORT.

REGARDLESS OF ANY
REPORT OF OURS, YOUR OWN
PROCTORS SHOULD HAVE
SOUNDED AN ALARM THE
MOMENT THAT WINDOW
WAS BREACHED.

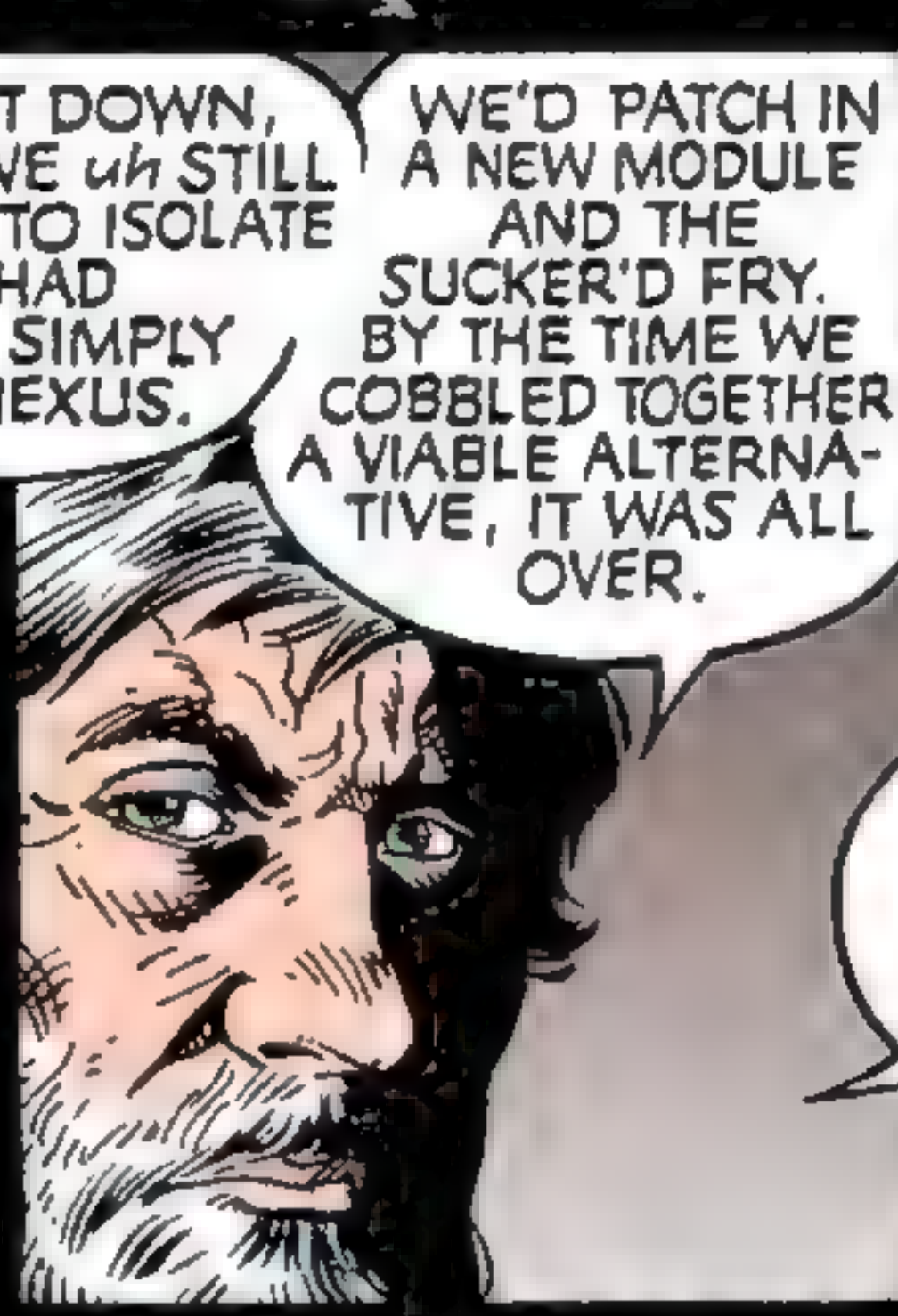


ACTUALLY *uh*
WE *uh* HAD A
MAJOR SYSTEMS
CRASH IN THE *uh*
PRIMARY SECURITY
MAINFRAME
AT ABOUT
THAT
TIME.

DO
TELL.
BACK-
UPS?



EVERYTHING WENT DOWN,
TOP TO BOTTOM. WE *uh* STILL
HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO ISOLATE
THE FAULT. HELL, WE HAD
TROUBLE ENOUGH SIMPLY
RESTORING THE NEXUS.



WE'D PATCH IN
A NEW MODULE
AND THE
SUCKER'D FRY.
BY THE TIME WE
COBBLED TOGETHER
A VIABLE ALTERNA-
TIVE, IT WAS ALL
OVER.



WHY, THANK YOU, MR.
ROBESON, FOR THAT MOST
ENLIGHTENING-- AND
WHOLLY *UNSOLICITED*--
REPORT.

I'LL BE
SURE TO REMEMBER
IT-- AND YOU-- WHEN
I PRESENT MINE.

uh YES
MA'AM
THANK YOU
MA'AM
SORRY
MA'AM



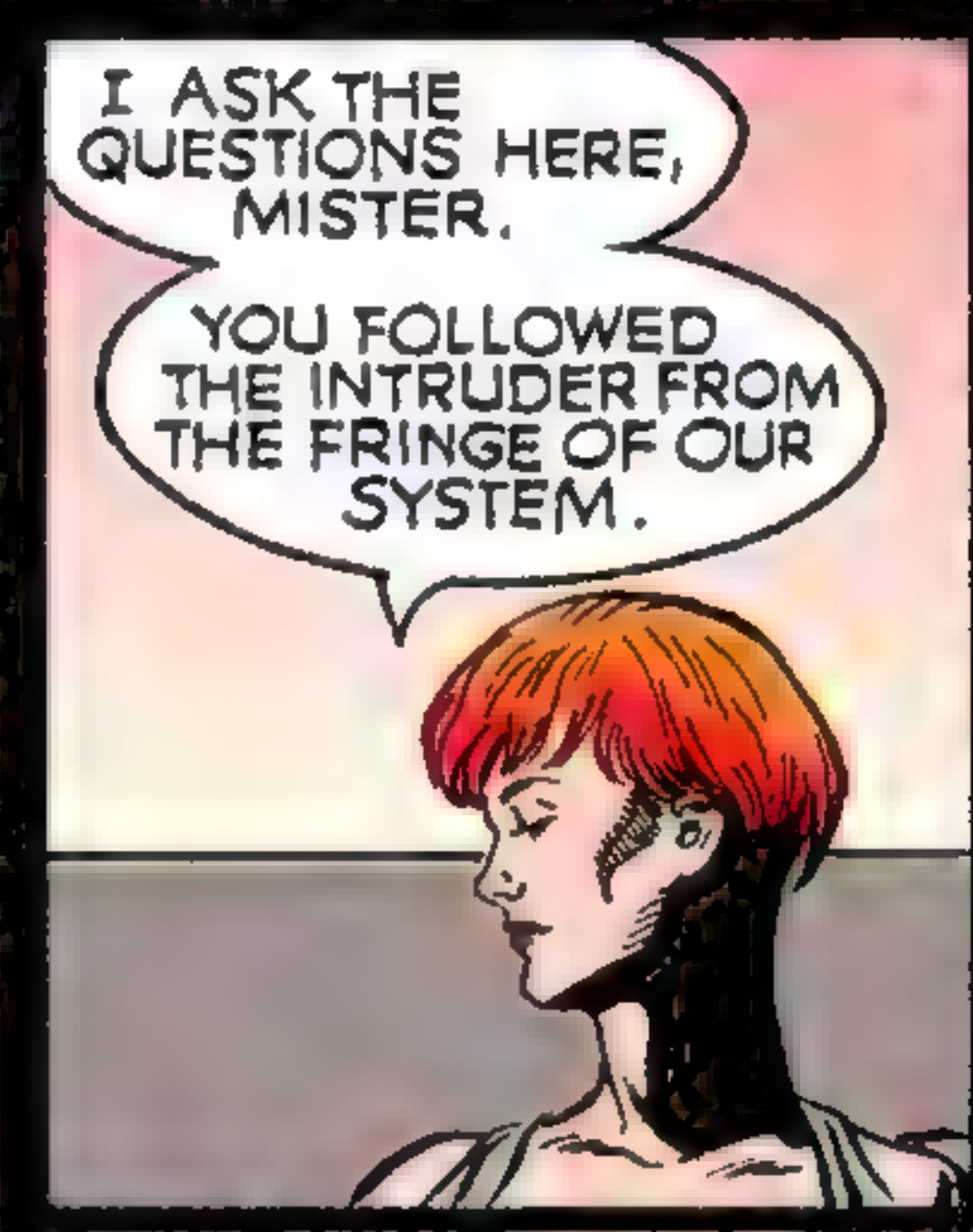
COINCIDENCE?



YEAH.
RIGHT. SURE.
TELL ME
ANOTHER.

WHA'D'YA FIGURE,
TOMMY? WE WALK
OURSELVES INTO THE
MIDDLE OF A
CORPORATE RUCKUS?

HOW 'BOUT IT, CHIEF? YOU
GOT A RIVAL WITH A GRUDGE?



I ASK THE
QUESTIONS HERE,
MISTER.

YOU FOLLOWED
THE INTRUDER FROM
THE FRINGE OF OUR
SYSTEM.



PERHAPS YOU WOULD
KNOW WHERE IT CAME
FROM AS WELL, AND
WHERE IT'S TAKEN
MADAME
DELACROIX?



"MADAME
DELACROIX"
IS MY
MOTHER,
GISANDE!

MY
FATHER'S
TRUE
WIFE.

CARYN
IS
MERELY
HIS
TROPHY.

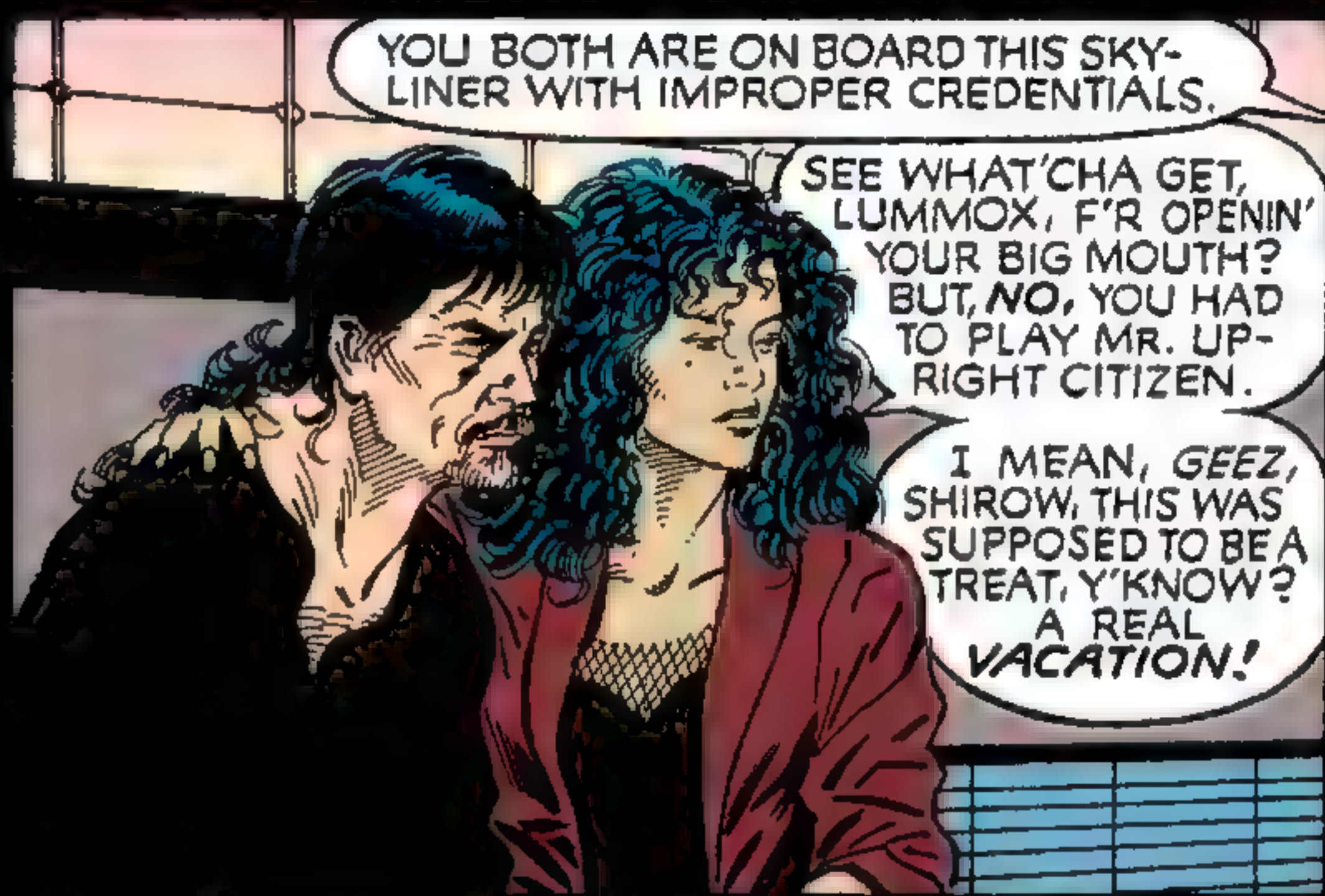


MY APOLOGIES, WILLEM. I
MEANT NO DISRESPECT.

HOWEVER, SHIROW, YOU
AND YOUR LADY FRIEND
DON'T SEEM TO APPRE-
CIATE THE GRAVITY OF
YOUR SITUATION.



I TRUST,
CHIEF, YOU'LL
ENLIGHTEN
US.



YOU BOTH ARE ON BOARD THIS SKY-LINER WITH IMPROPER CREDENTIALS.

SEE WHAT'CHA GET, LUMMOX, F'R OPENIN' YOUR BIG MOUTH? BUT, NO, YOU HAD TO PLAY MR. UP-RIGHT CITIZEN.

I MEAN, GEEZ, SHIROW, THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A TREAT, Y'KNOW? A REAL VACATION!



PERHAPS A STRETCH IN DETENTION WILL PERSUADE YOU TO TAKE THIS MATTER SERIOUSLY. OR, FAILING THAT, PRISON.

I'M CERTAIN YOU KNOW MORE THAN YOU'VE SAID. I SUGGEST YOU TALK NOW, WHILE YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY.



BEFORE THINGS GET UGLY.

I'M OPEN TO SUGGESTIONS, MARIA.

EXCUSE ME?

HOW IS IT, WHENEVER WE GET INTO REAL TROUBLE-- WHICH IS ALMOST INVARIABLY YOUR FAULT, I MIGHT ADD--

-- I'M ALL OF A SUDDEN THE BRAINS OF THE OUTFIT?

A MAN'S GOT TO KNOW HIS LIMITATIONS.



WE'LL SEE HOW QUICK YOU ARE WITH YOUR WITS AFTER A STRETCH IN SOLITARY.

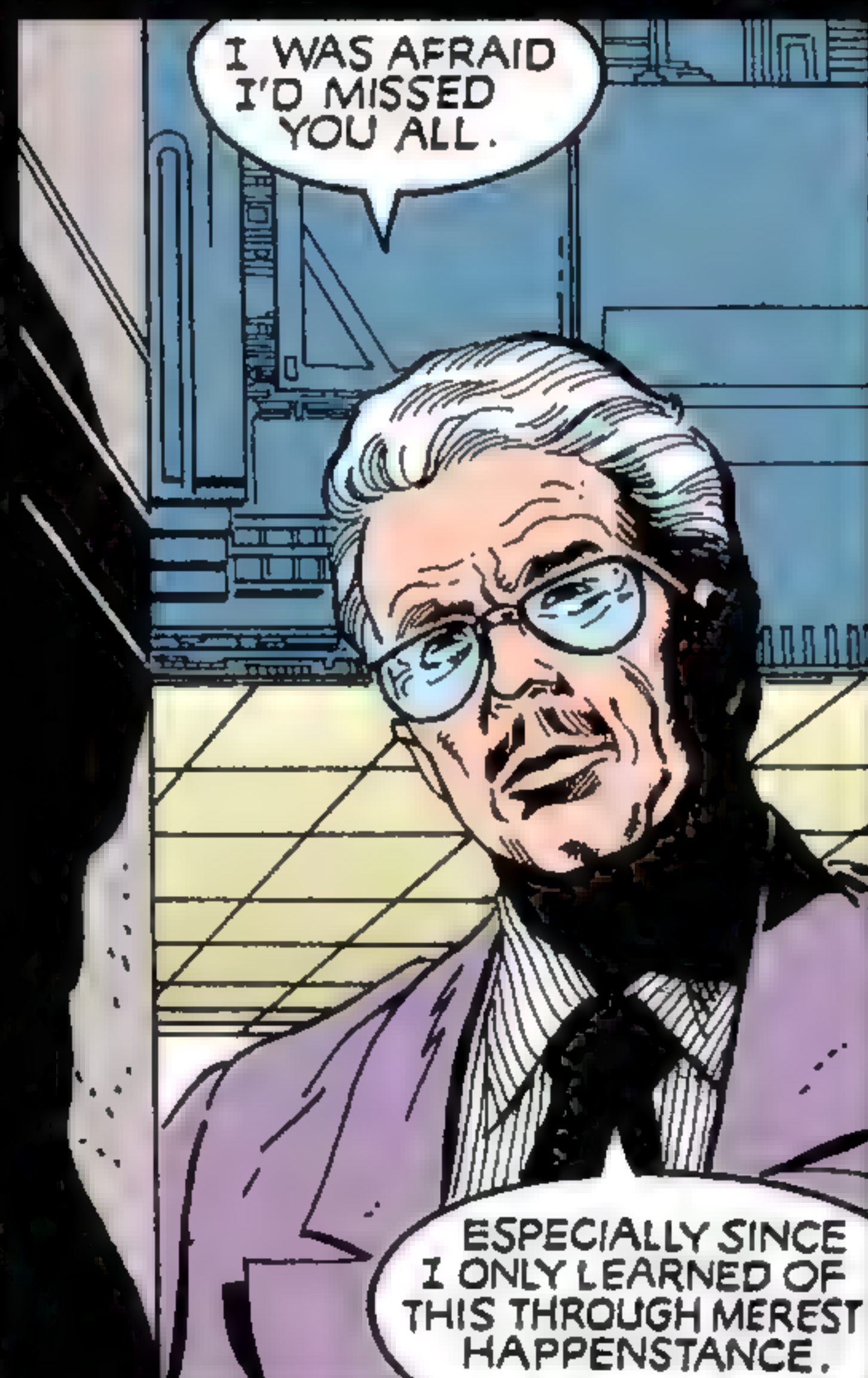
THE RULES ARE VERY STRICT, AND THE STAFF MOST ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT ENFORCING THEM.

TAKE THEM AWAY.



GISANDE! THERE YOU ARE, MY DEAR, HOW WONDERFUL!

LUCIEN?!?



I WAS AFRAID I'D MISSED YOU ALL.

ESPECIALLY SINCE I ONLY LEARNED OF THIS THROUGH MEREST HAPPENSTANCE.



WE'RE JUST WRAPPING UP HERE, LUCIEN.

I WAS ON MY WAY TO GIVE YOU A FULL REPORT.

I'M SURE YOU WERE, MY DEAR.

BUT UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I DECIDED NOT TO WAIT.



I'M SURE YOU'LL UNDERSTAND-- AND FORGIVE-- AN OLD MAN'S IMPATIENCE, AND CONCERN, SINCE THE LIFE OF SOMEONE I DEEPLY CARE FOR IS AT STAKE.

WILLEM, I WAS SO SORRY TO HEAR OF SHARI. I KNOW HOW MUCH SHE MEANT TO YOU.

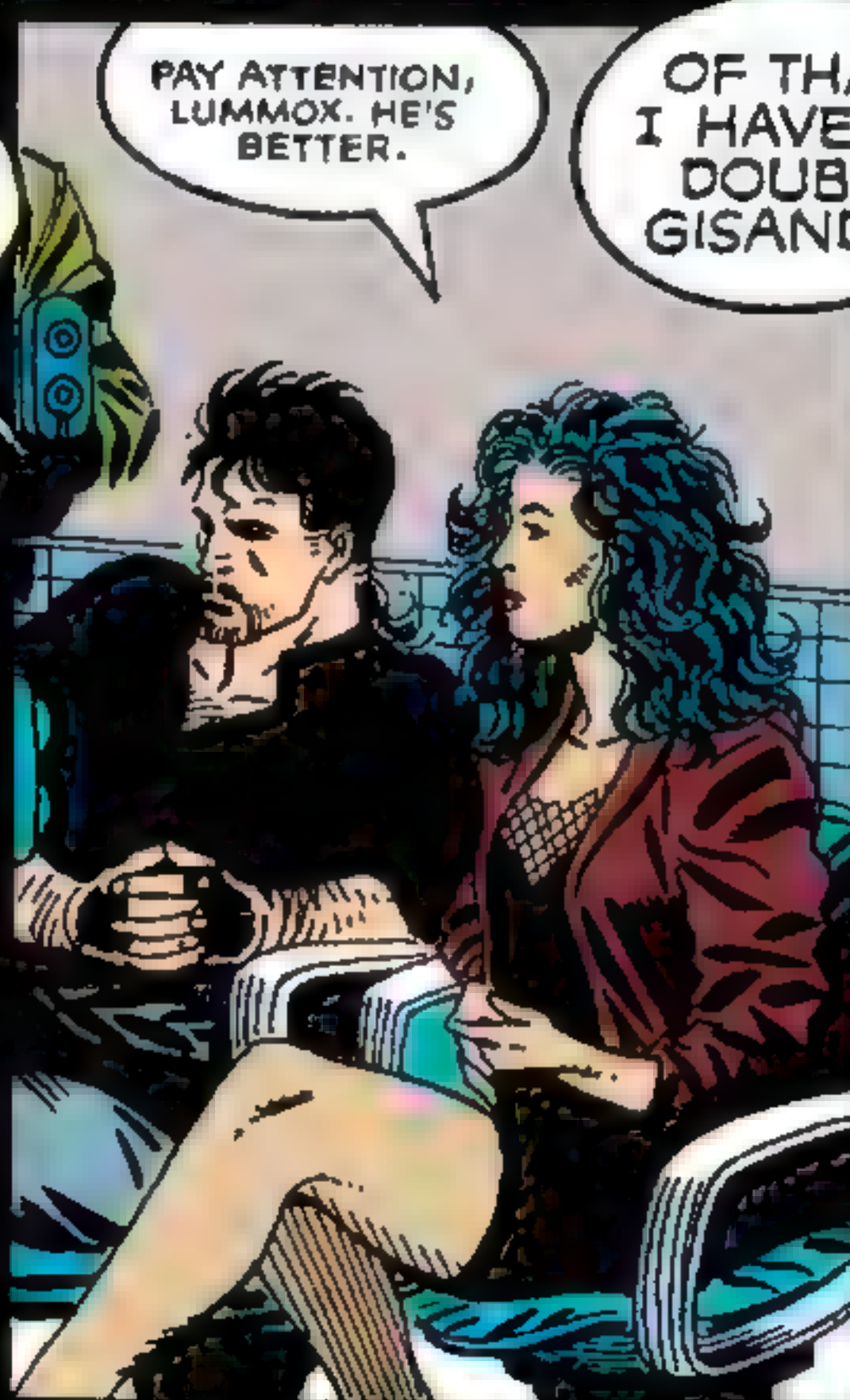
THANK YOU, FATHER.

WE'LL FIND CARYN, LUCIEN--I GIVE YOU MY SOLEMN OATH--



--AND RETURN HER TO YOU SAFE AND SOUND.

SHE'S VERY GOOD.



PAY ATTENTION, LUMMOX. HE'S BETTER.

OF THAT I HAVE NO DOUBT, GISANDE.

THIS IS NO REFLECTION ON YOUR COMPETENCE, MY DEAR, OR THAT OF YOUR STAFF...

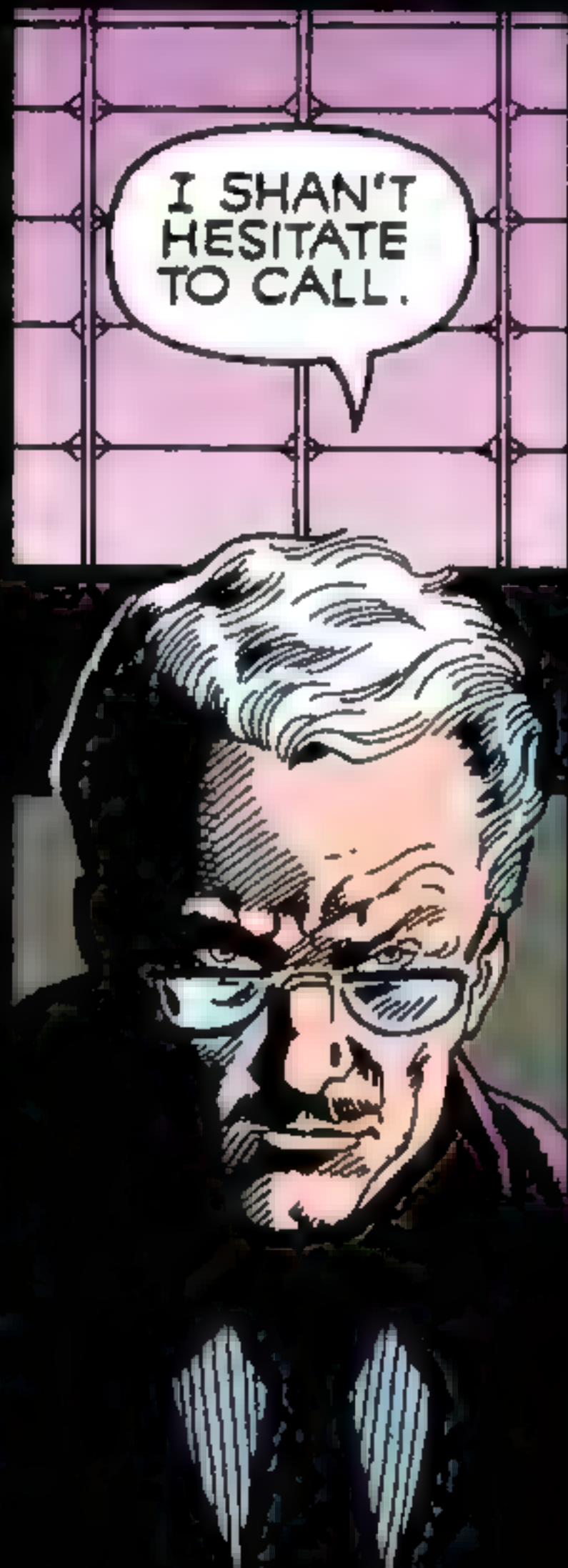


... BUT IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'D LIKE TO SPEAK TO THESE TWO IN PRIVATE.

FATHER, WE CAN HANDLE THIS!



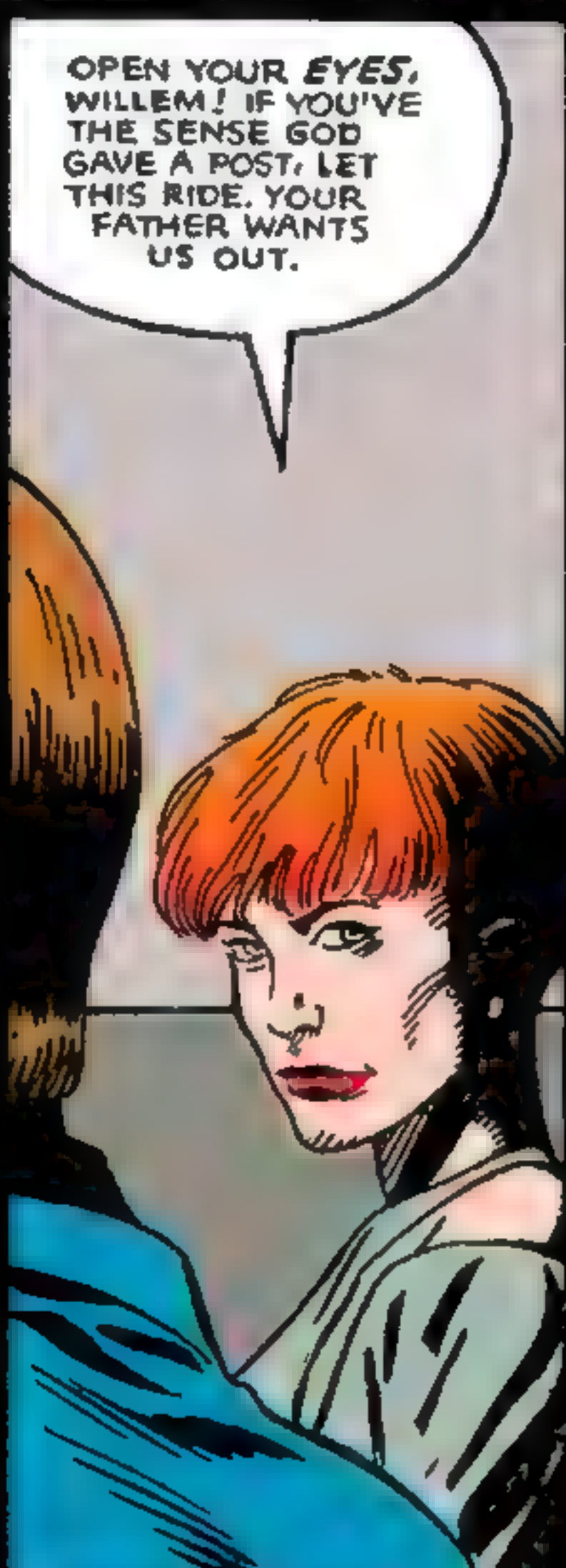
AS YOU WISH, LUCIEN. IF YOU SHOULD NEED US...



I SHAN'T HESITATE TO CALL.



FATHER!

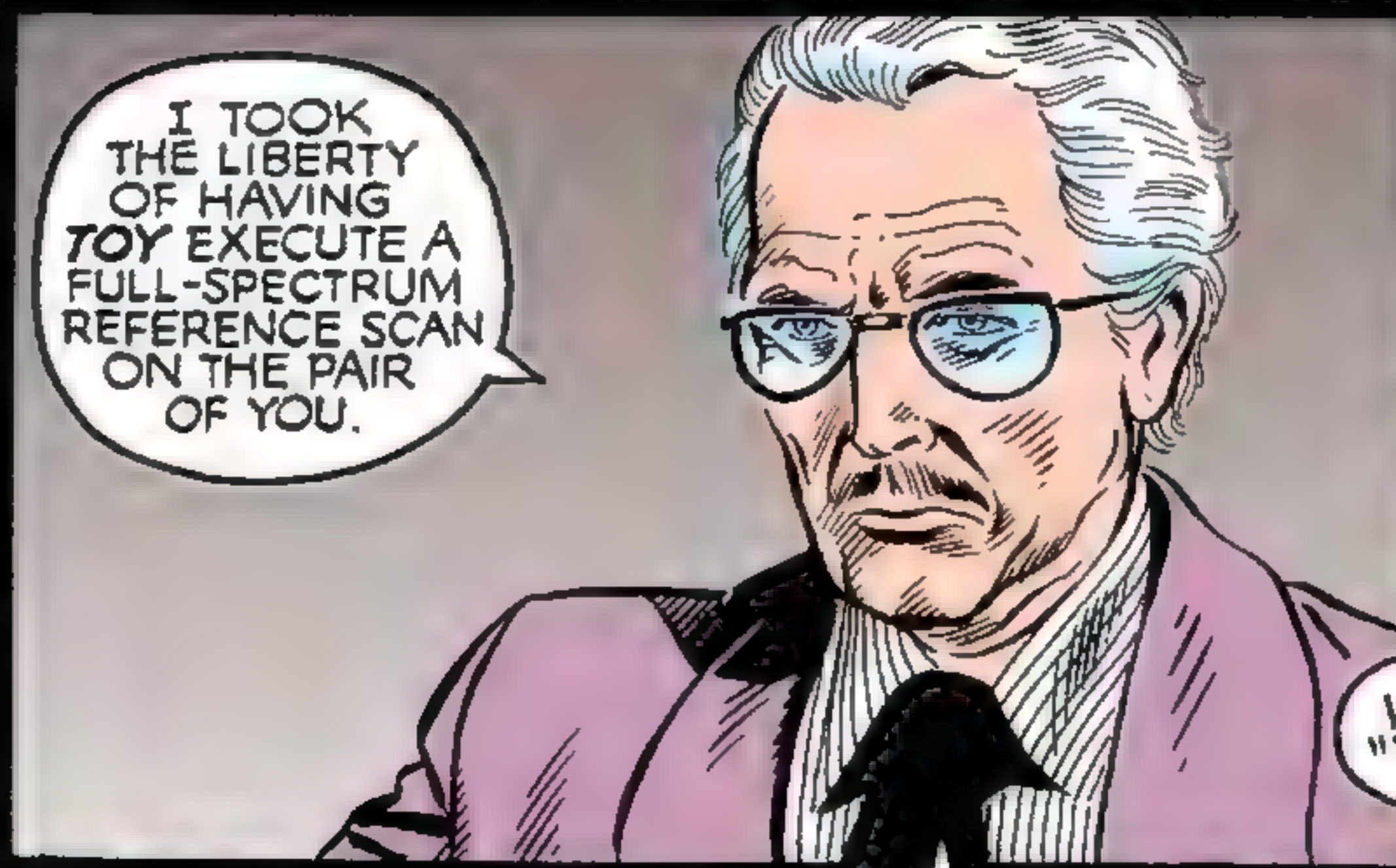


OPEN YOUR EYES, WILLEM! IF YOU'VE THE SENSE GOD GAVE A POST, LET THIS RIDE. YOUR FATHER WANTS US OUT.



ALL WE CAN DO IS GO.

FOR NOW.



I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF HAVING **TOY** EXECUTE A FULL-SPECTRUM REFERENCE SCAN ON THE PAIR OF YOU.

I TOLD YOU SO. BUT **YOU** SAID THEY'D NEVER BOTHER.

NOBODY **EVER** LISTENS TO ME, WHY IS THAT?

WHO'S "**TOY**"?

SOME MIGHT CALL HIM A **WHAT**, ACTUALLY. BUT WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER, AND WORKED TOGETHER, FOR SO LONG, I'VE COME TO THINK OF HIM AS A PERSON IN HIS OWN RIGHT.

TOY IS A VERY SPECIAL AND ALTOGETHER UNIQUE COMPUTER SYSTEM.



SALUTATIONS, MAJOR SHIROW, COLONEL DeMEDICI.



FORGIVE THE DELAY, LUCIEN. THE DATA WERE ENCRYPTED ON A RESTRICTED-ACCESS FILE IN THE DEFENSE FORCES MAIN REFERENCE CACHE.

IT WAS NECESSARY TO PERSUADE THE MILITARY OPERATING SYSTEM TO RELEASE IT TO ME.

SO MUCH FOR GUARANTEES OF PRIVACY.



HEY, TOMMY, **ANY** NETWORK CAN BE COMPROMISED.

ESPECIALLY BY THIS **CHARMING** A SYSTEM.

MY THANKS FOR THE COMPLIMENT.

TOMAS SHIROW AND MARIA DeMEDICI ARE **STRIKE FORCE RANGERS**, SPECIALIZING IN LONG-RANGE COMMANDO OPERATIONS. AS **ULTIMATE HAZARD** PERSONNEL, THEY ARE BANNED BY LAW FROM BOARDING ANY CORPORATE SKYLINER.

YOUR CURRENT PRESENCE ON EARTH IS UNAUTHORIZED.



IT'S A CHARACTER FLAW, Y'KNOW? THE MORE WE'RE TOLD TO STEER CLEAR OF SOMEWHERE...

...THE MORE DETERMINED WE ARE TO GO.



IF THIS MATTER WERE TO BE PURSUED, IT IS DOUBTFUL EVEN YOUR MOST FORMIDABLE RECORDS WOULD SAVE YOU.



AT THE VERY LEAST, YOU WOULD BE CASHIERED IN DISGRACE AND BANISHED UNDER IRREVOCABLE QUARANTINE TO SOME REMOTE FRINGE WORLD.

ON THE OTHER HAND, WERE YOU TO ASSIST WHOLE-HEARTEDLY IN THE RESOLUTION OF THIS MATTER...

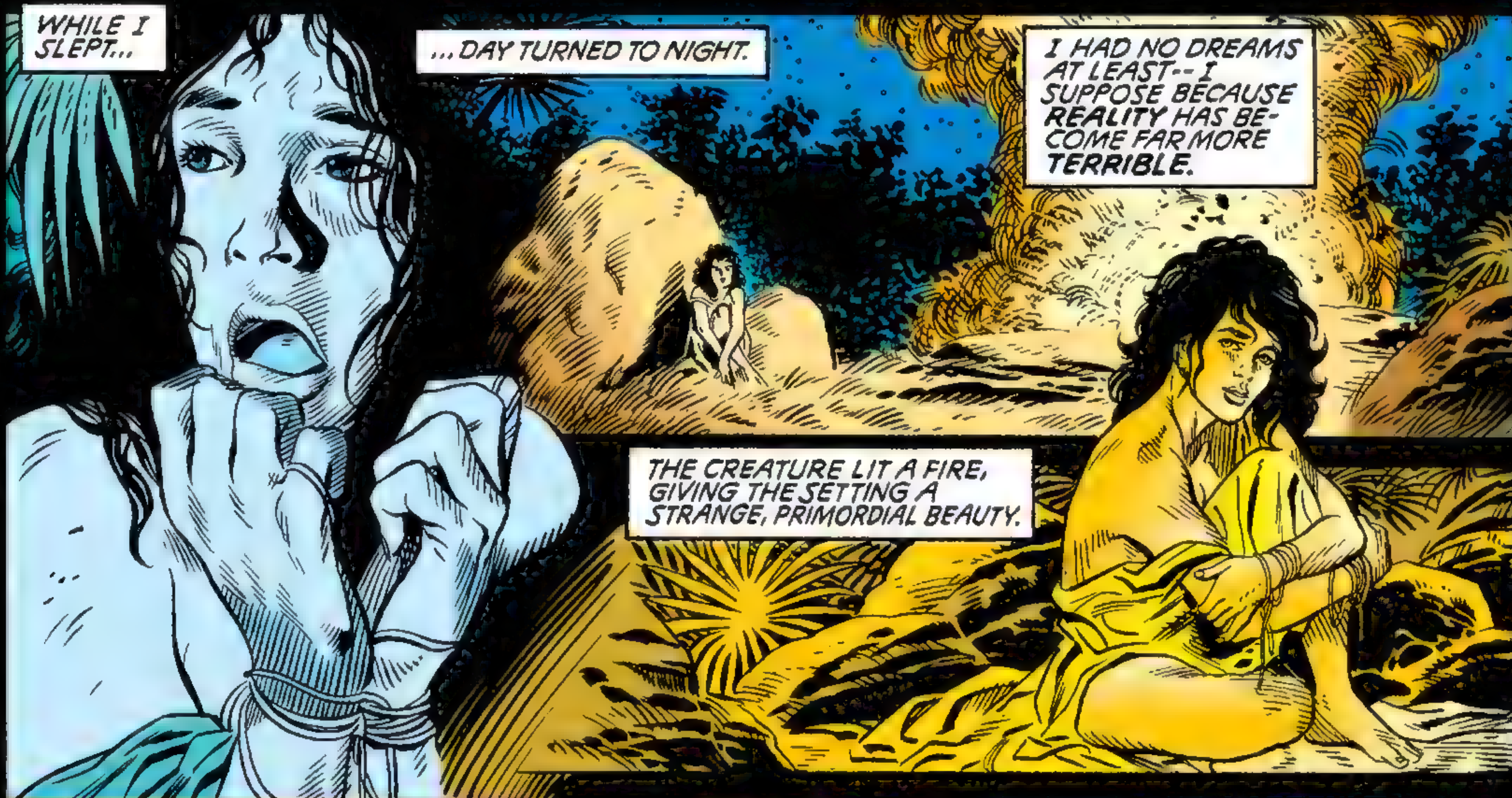
AM I SURPRISED, OR WHAT? NO GUARANTEES.

CONSIDERING THE ALTERNATIVES... BUT I HAVE TO TELL YOU, SEIGNEUR, THE ODDS ARE, YOUR LADY'S ALREADY DEAD.



ALL I ASK IS THAT YOU TRY.



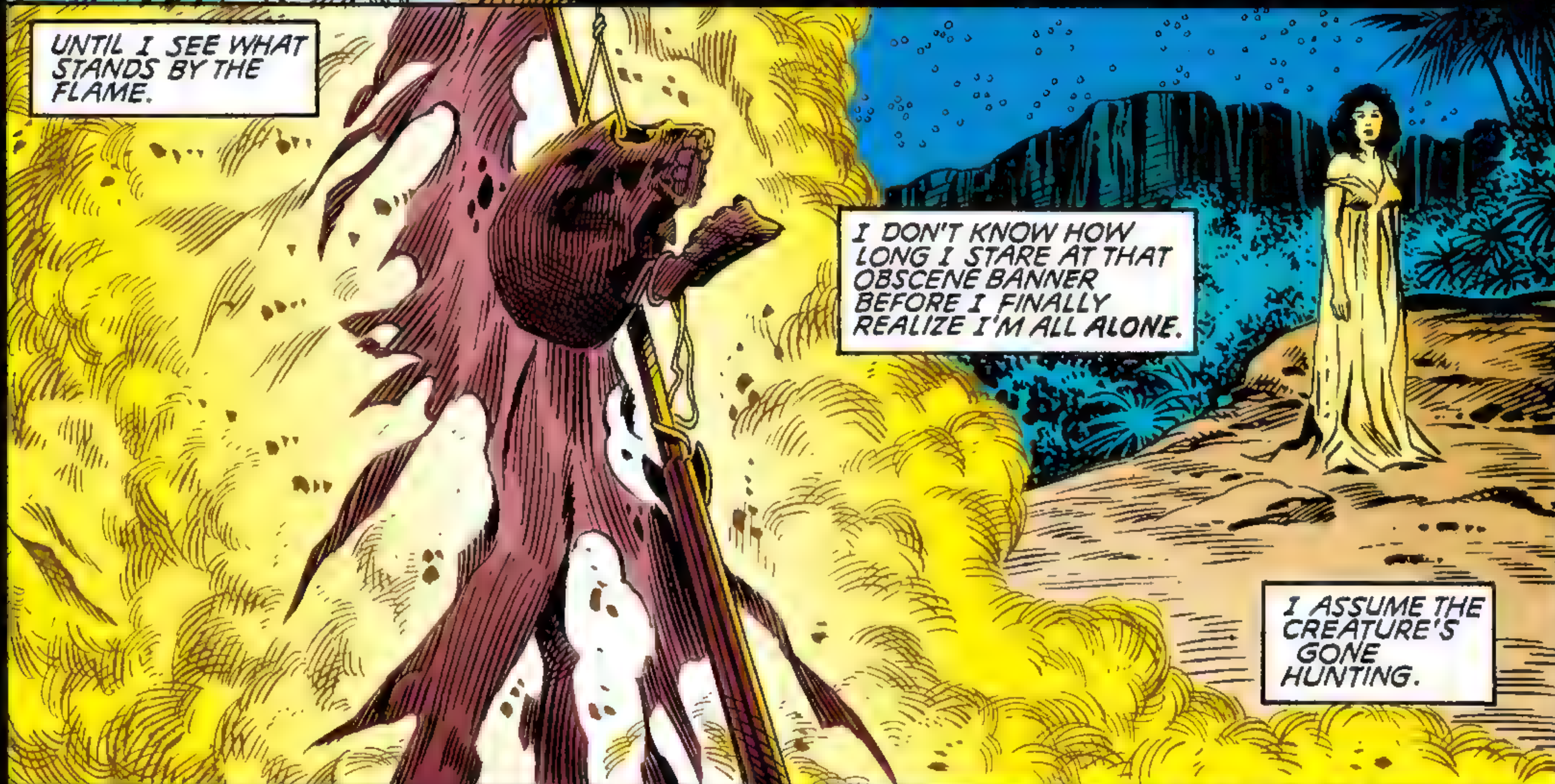


WHILE I SLEPT...

... DAY TURNED TO NIGHT.

I HAD NO DREAMS AT LEAST-- I SUPPOSE BECAUSE REALITY HAS BECOME FAR MORE TERRIBLE.

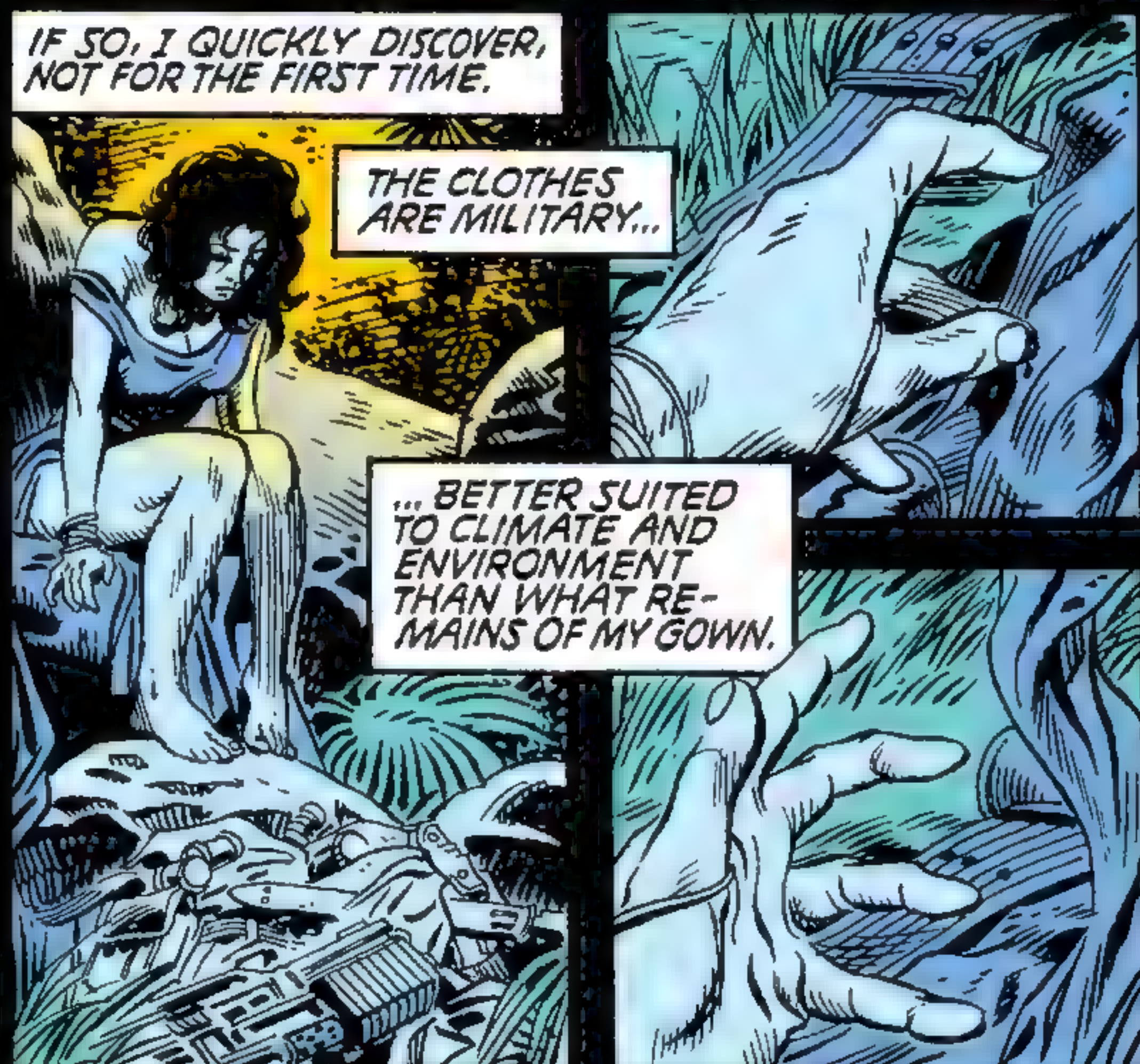
THE CREATURE LIT A FIRE, GIVING THE SETTING A STRANGE, PRIMORDIAL BEAUTY.



UNTIL I SEE WHAT STANDS BY THE FLAME.

I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I STARE AT THAT OBSCENE BANNER BEFORE I FINALLY REALIZE I'M ALL ALONE.

I ASSUME THE CREATURE'S GONE HUNTING.



IF SO, I QUICKLY DISCOVER, NOT FOR THE FIRST TIME.

THE CLOTHES ARE MILITARY...

... BETTER SUITED TO CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT THAN WHAT REMAINS OF MY GOWN.



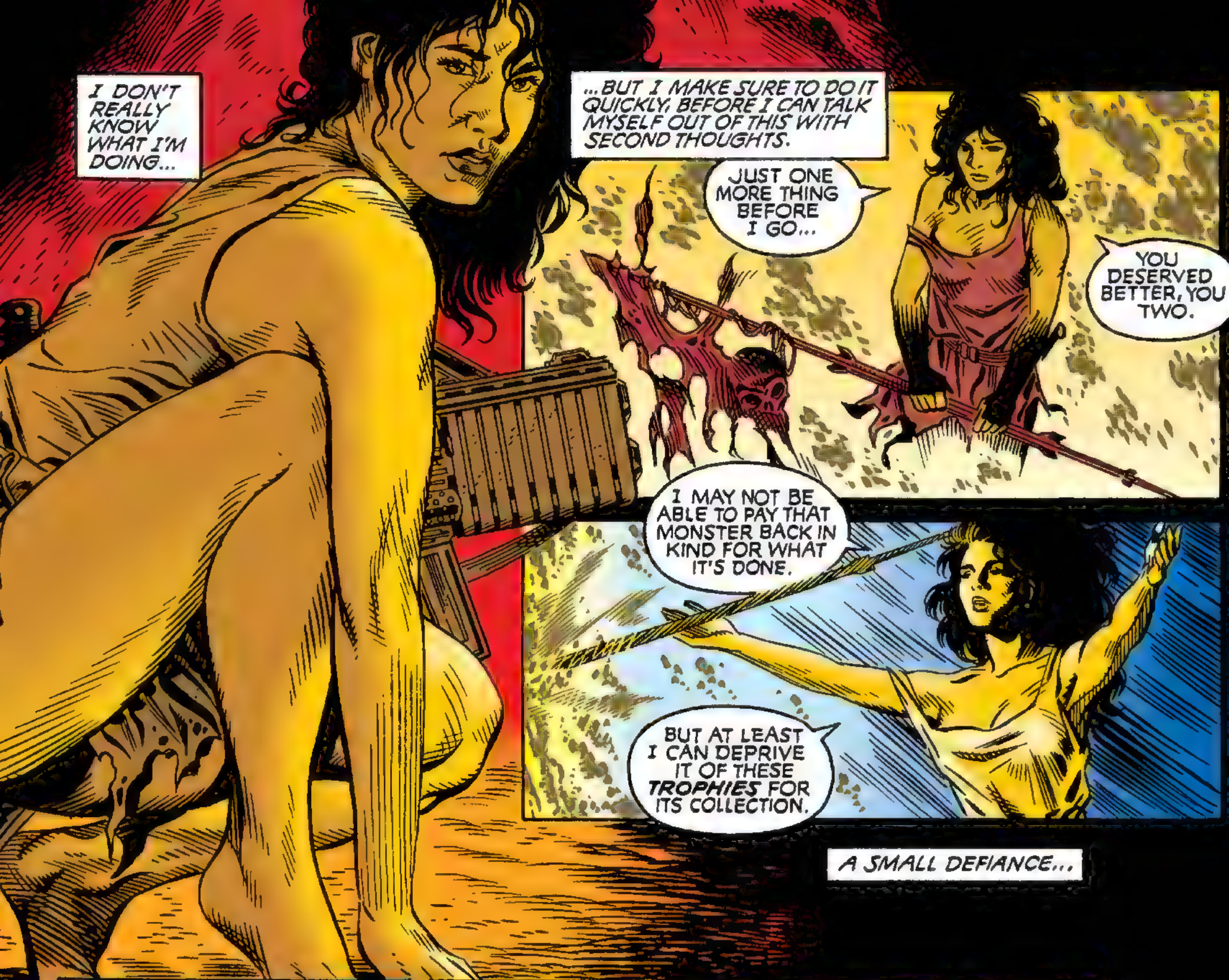
THE SHIRT'S TORN, SODDEN WITH FRESH BLOOD.

I WONDER HOW HARD I'LL HAVE TO SEARCH TO FIND THAT POOR SOUL'S SKULL AND SKIN?



PERHAPS IT BELIEVES ME SO SCARED I'LL SIT AND WAIT...

...FOR MY OWN EXECUTION?



I DON'T
REALLY
KNOW
WHAT I'M
DOING...

... BUT I MAKE SURE TO DO IT
QUICKLY, BEFORE I CAN TALK
MYSELF OUT OF THIS WITH
SECOND THOUGHTS.

JUST ONE
MORE THING
BEFORE
I GO...

YOU
DESERVED
BETTER, YOU
TWO.

I MAY NOT BE
ABLE TO PAY THAT
MONSTER BACK IN
KIND FOR WHAT
IT'S DONE.

BUT AT LEAST
I CAN DEPRIVE
IT OF THESE
TROPHIES FOR
ITS COLLECTION.

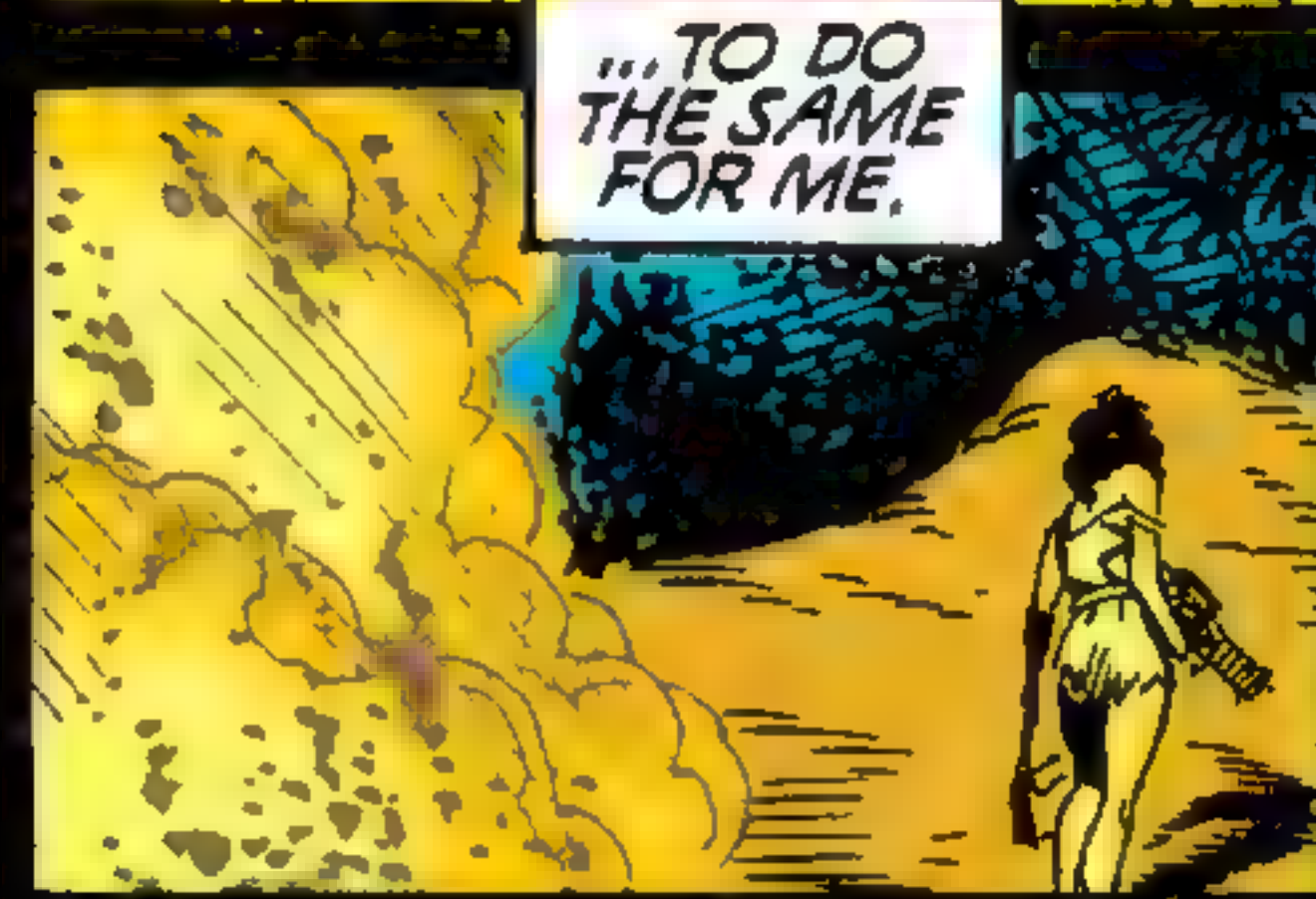
A SMALL DEFIANCE...



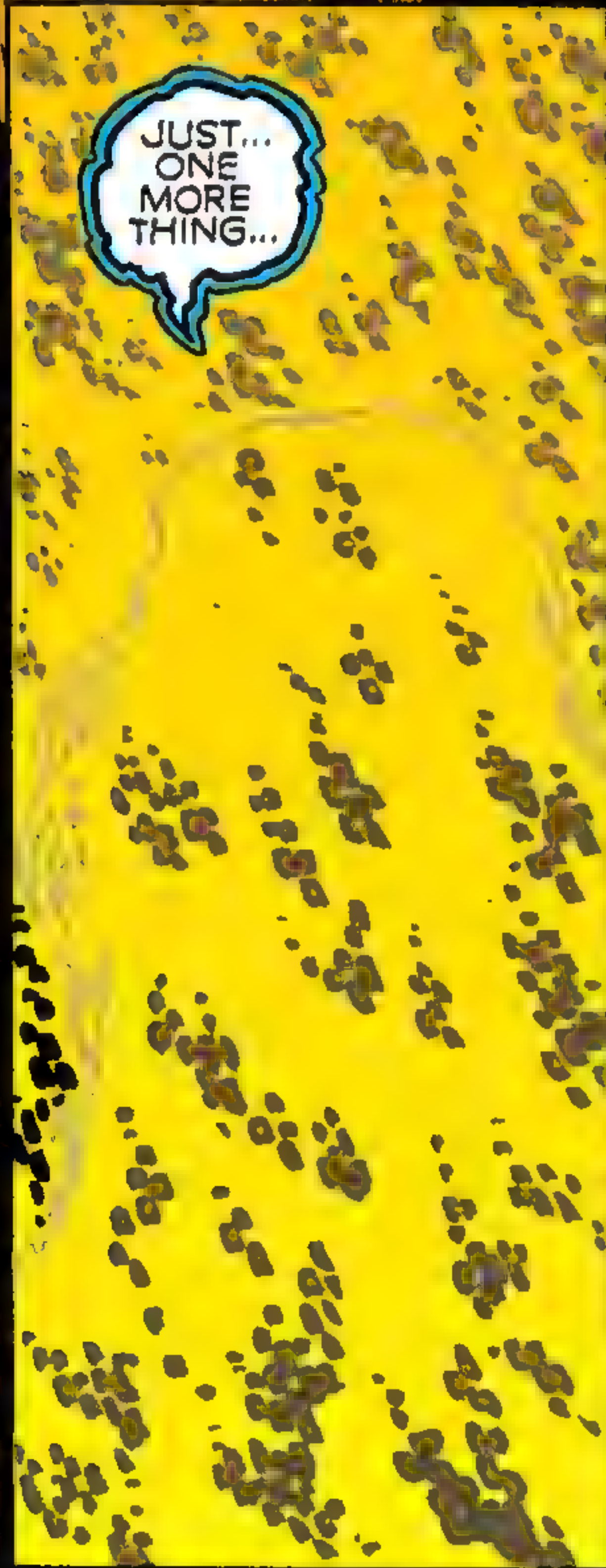
... BUT
MY
OWN.



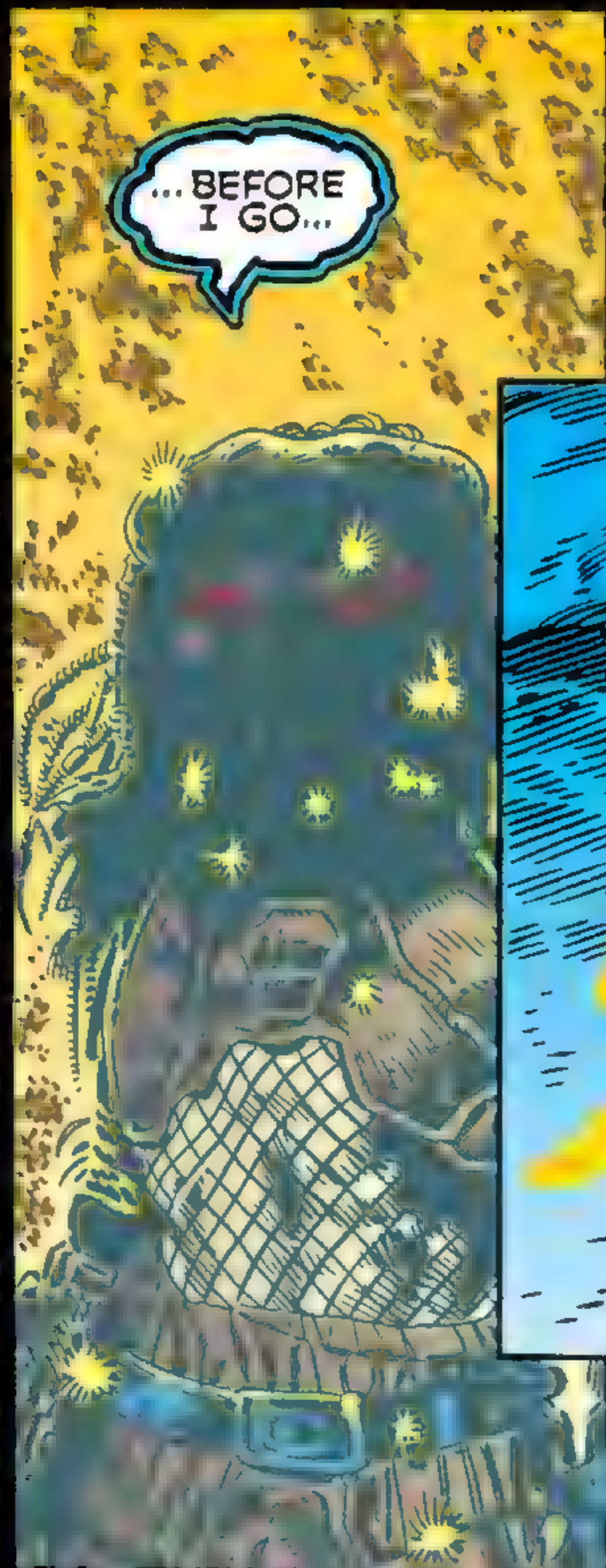
NOW, IF ONLY
THERE WERE
SOMEONE...



... TO DO
THE SAME
FOR ME.



JUST...
ONE
MORE
THING...



... BEFORE
I GO...

I WALK FOR MOST OF THE NIGHT...

THE JUNGLE'S VERY QUIET, MORE SO THAN EVER I IMAGINED.

EVERY LIVING THING SCARED AWAY, NO DOUBT, BY THE NEW PREDATOR IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

...AND THEN TUCK MYSELF INTO THE BOLE OF A TREE TO WAIT FOR DAWN.

MY MAIN WEAPON IS A COLONIAL MARINE-ISSUE PULSE RIFLE.

FULL CLIP OF TEN-MIL AMMO, PLUS SPARES.

PLUS GRENADES.

BLACK-MARKET PURCHASE, BUT IN FAIR CONDITION. I MAKE IT BETTER.

AND THEN I SIT BACK AND WONDER... HOW?

I'VE JUST FIELD-STRIPPED AND CLEANED A MILITARY RIFLE AS THOUGH I'VE BEEN DOING IT MY WHOLE LIFE.

THIS IS NUTS.

OR I AM.

UNLESS...

I GIGGLE, I CAN'T HELP MYSELF.

THE ANSWER'S SO OBVIOUS, SO ABSURD, IT HAS TO BE TRUE.

NONE OF THIS IS REAL.

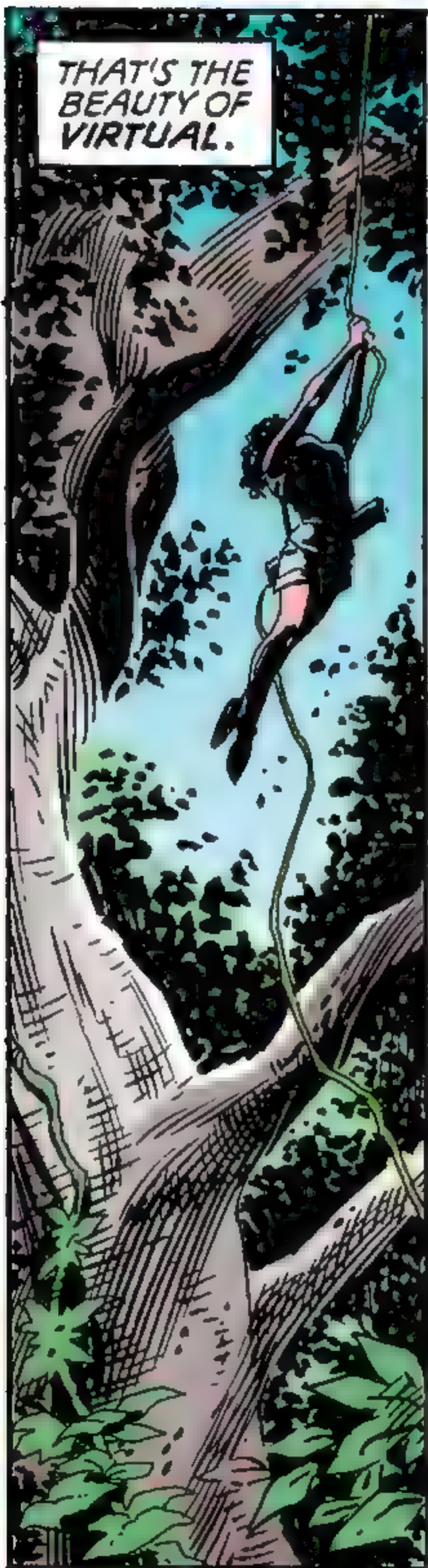
IT'S A VIRTUAL REALITY SCENARIO, COMPLETE WITH TEMPORARY KNOWLEDGE IMPLANTS-- SOMETHING LUCIEN HAD TOY WHIP UP, I'LL BET, TO TAKE MY MIND OFF MY TROUBLES.

A LITTLE MORE ROUGH-TRADE THAN I'M USED TO, BUT PERHAPS DR. JOHANNES FELT I NEEDED THE CATHARSIS.

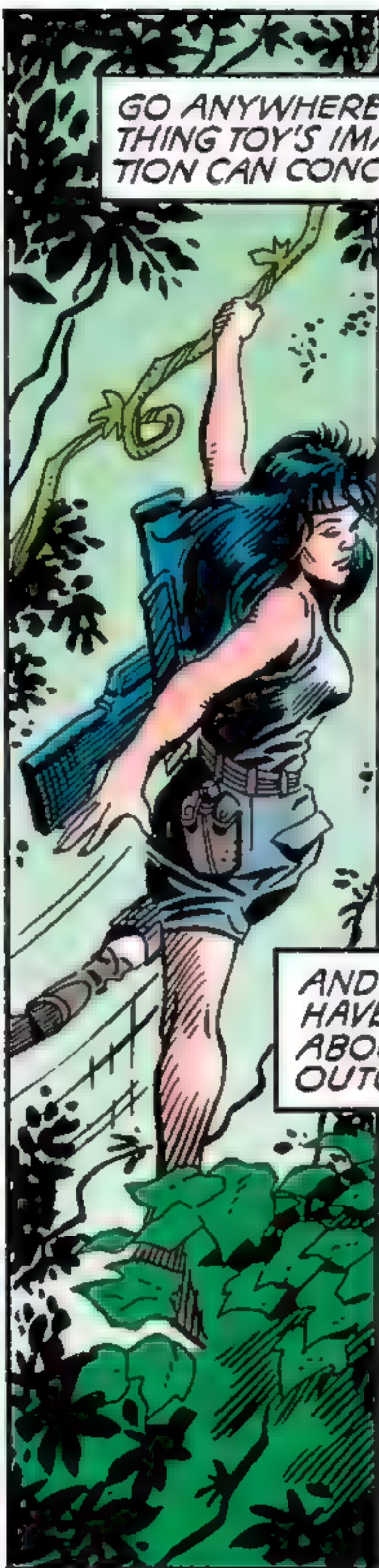
I SHOULD BE ANGRY...

... BUT I'M TOO RELIEVED TO DISCOVER THIS IS ONLY A GAME.

NOW I CAN ENJOY MYSELF.



THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF VIRTUAL.



GO ANYWHERE, DO ANYTHING TOY'S IMAGINATION CAN CONCEIVE.



AND NEVER HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THE OUTCOME.

WIN OR LOSE, YOU'LL NEVER GET HURT.



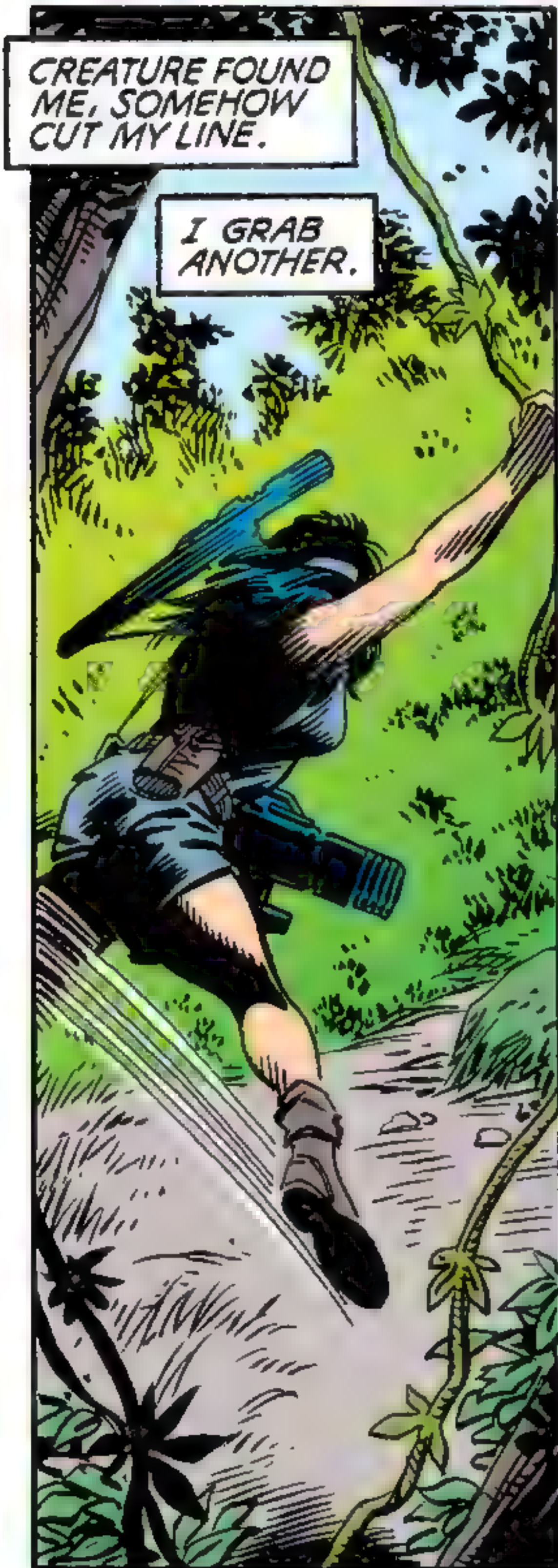
WHIZZ



STUPID STUPID STUPID!

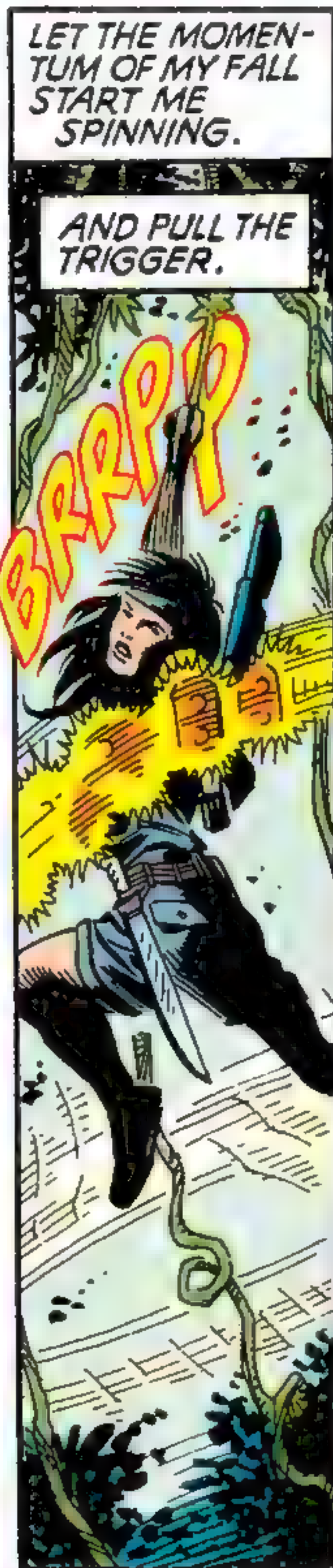
SHOULD HAVE BEEN PAYING ATTENTION.

FORGOT THE DAMN SCENARIO.



CREATURE FOUND ME, SOMEHOW CUT MY LINE.

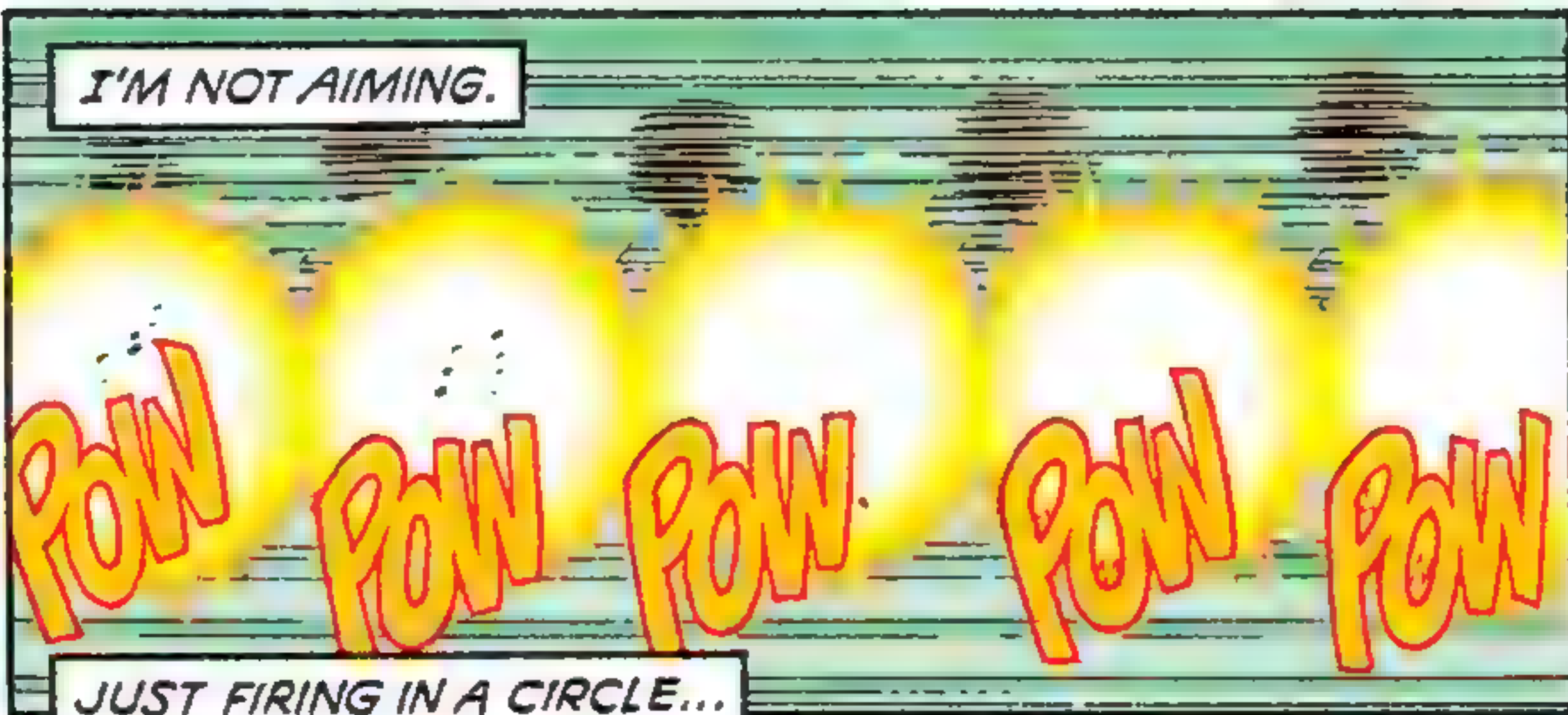
I GRAB ANOTHER.



LET THE MOMENTUM OF MY FALL START ME SPINNING.

AND PULL THE TRIGGER.

BRPP



I'M NOT AIMING.

POW POW POW POW POW

JUST FIRING IN A CIRCLE...



BYEOW

VIP VAP

VYANG

FAP FAP FAP



...TO FORCE THE HUNTER TO DUCK ITS HEAD...

VIP VIP VIP FAP FAP FAP POW BYEOW POW POW VYANG POW

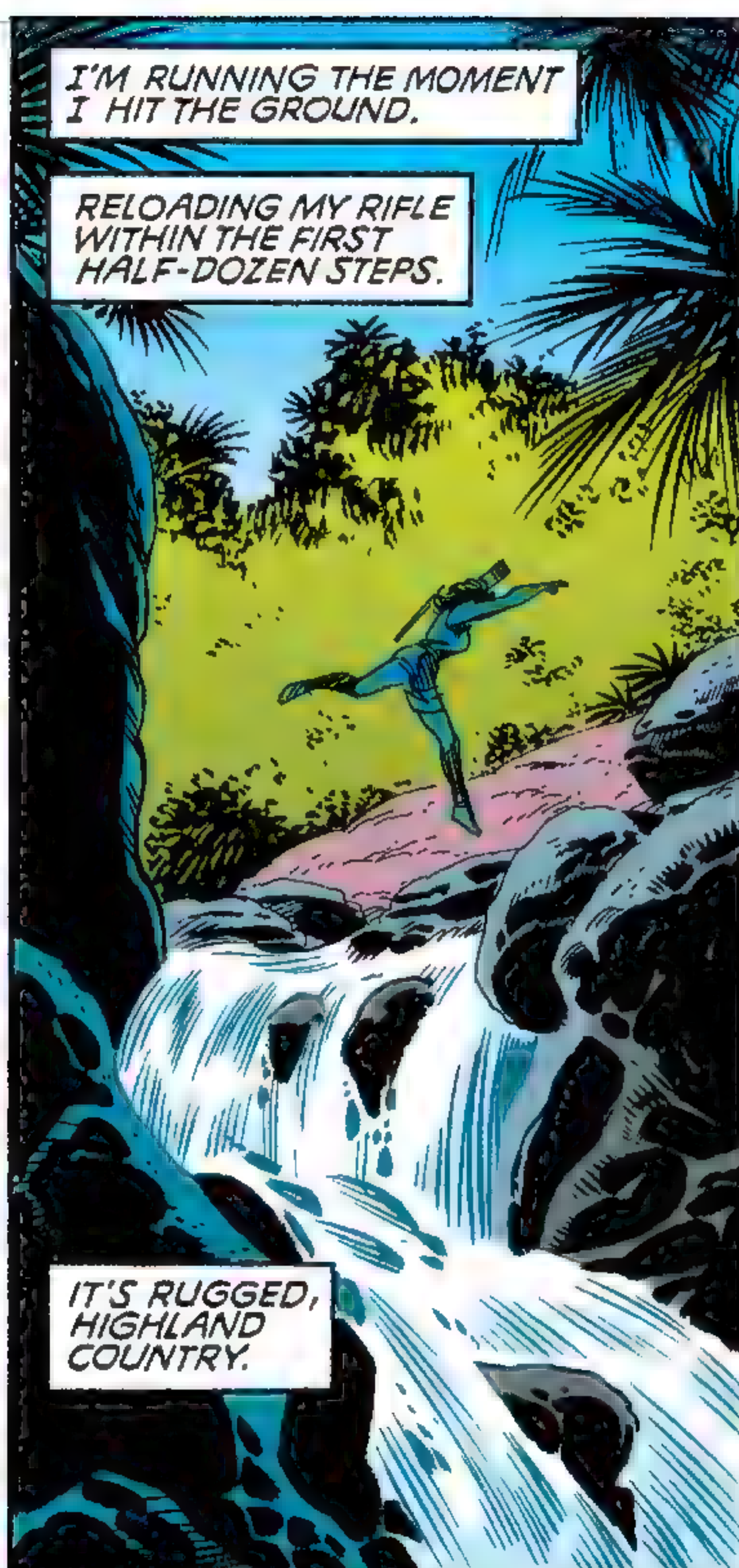
...AND KEEP IT DOWN.



THE GUN'S VERY IMPRESSIVE--
TWO HUNDRED ROUNDS GONE
IN A MATTER OF SECONDS.

PITY I DIDN'T HIT ANY-
THING BUT JUNGLE--

-- BUT THEN I
ASSUME TOY DIDN'T
WANT TO MAKE THIS
SCENARIO TOO
EASY FOR ME.



I'M RUNNING THE MOMENT
I HIT THE GROUND.

RELOADING MY RIFLE
WITHIN THE FIRST
HALF-DOZEN STEPS.

IT'S RUGGED,
HIGHLAND
COUNTRY.



I USE THAT
TO BEST
ADVANTAGE.

UPSLOPE, TO
MAKE MY
PURSUER CLIMB
AFTER ME AND
SLOW IT DOWN.

OPEN
LAND, TO
DENY IT
COVER.



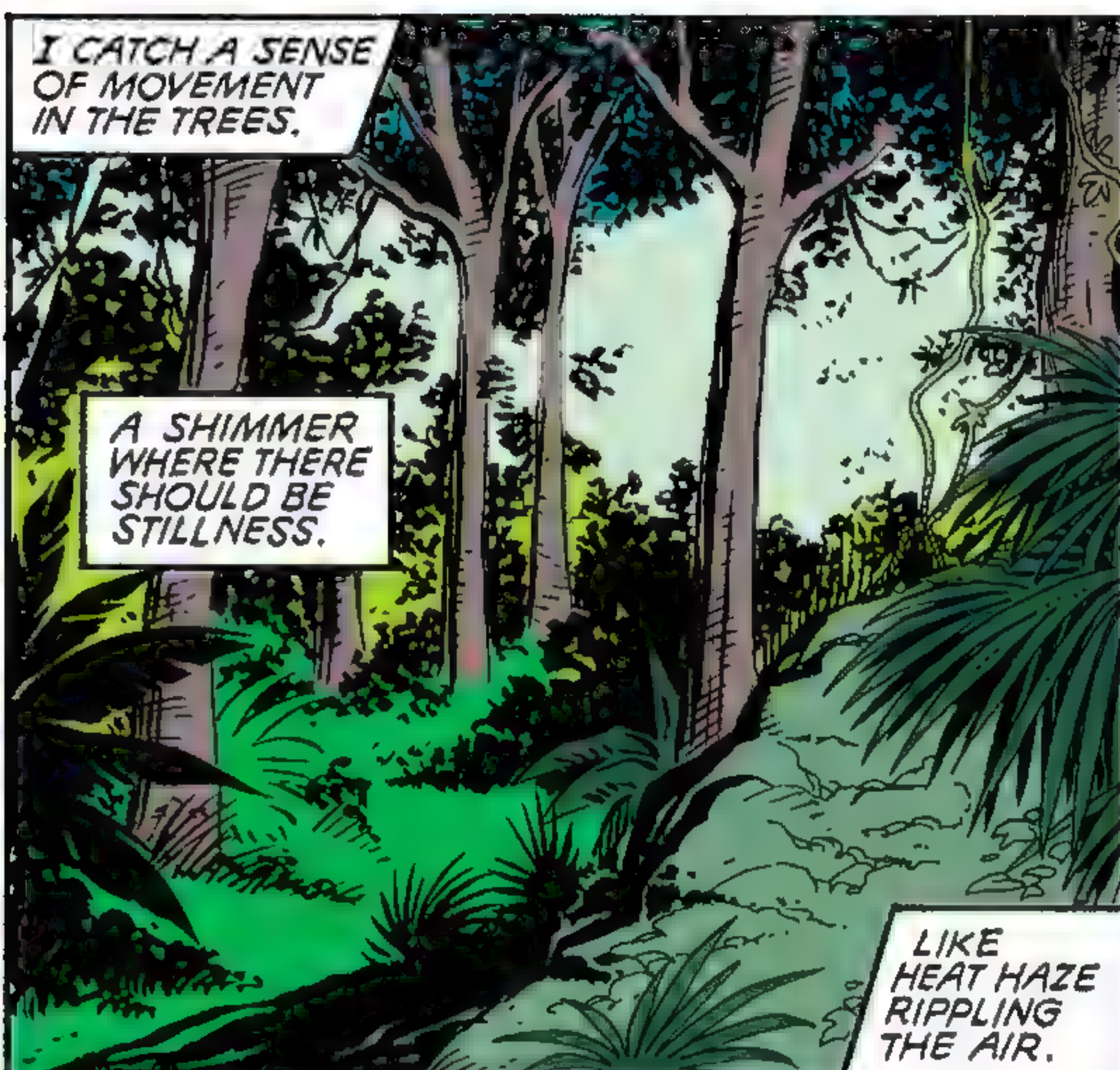
I RUN A RANDOM,
ZIGZAG PATTERN...

...TO DENY IT A CLEAR
SHOT FOR ITS LASER.

ALL THE RIGHT
IDEAS.

BUT MY BODY
ISN'T UP TO FUL-
FILLING THEM.

I'M PERFECT
FOR SOME THINGS.
NOT THIS.



I CATCH A SENSE
OF MOVEMENT
IN THE TREES.

A SHIMMER
WHERE THERE
SHOULD BE
STILLNESS.

LIKE
HEAT HAZE
RIPPLING
THE AIR.



MY BODY
REACTS
OF ITS OWN
ACCORD.

GRENADES, THIS
TIME, A RAPID-
FIRE SPREAD.



IF IT'S USING THE TREES...

...LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I KNOCK THEM DOWN.



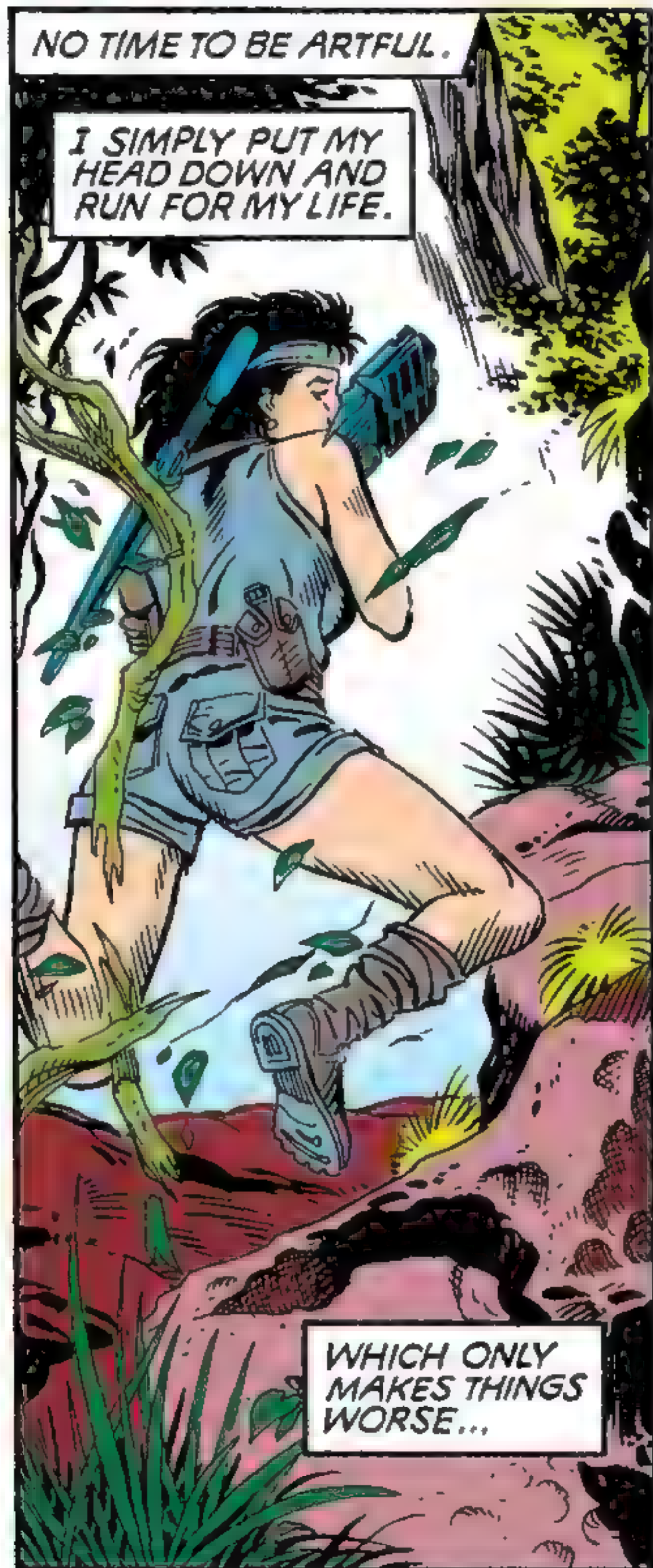
GREAT CONCEPT.

NOT SO GREAT EXECUTION...

...AS ONE TRUNK TOPPLES ANOTHER IN A CASCADING CHAIN REACTION...



...THAT HEADS RIGHT FOR ME!



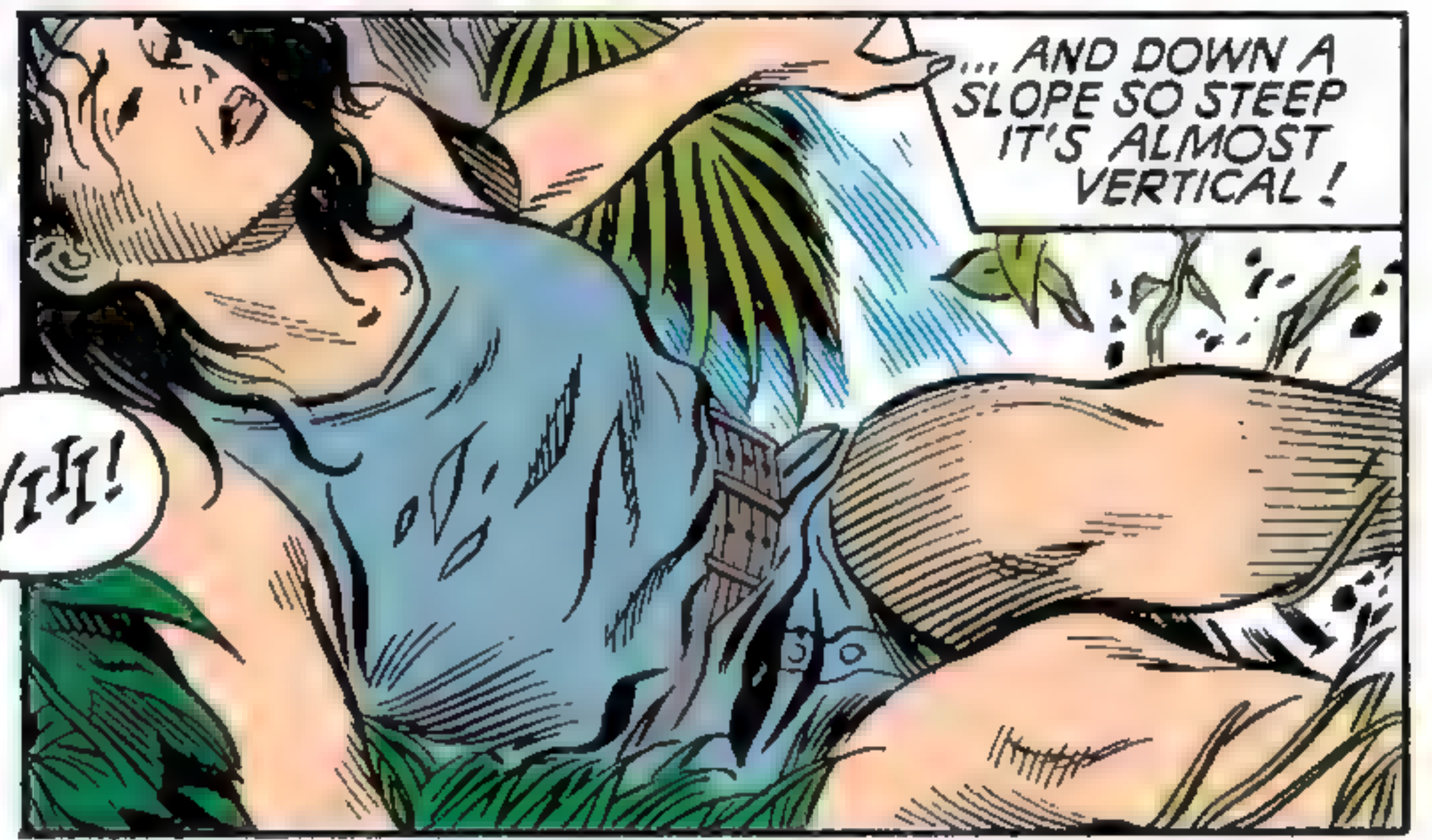
NO TIME TO BE ARTFUL.

I SIMPLY PUT MY HEAD DOWN AND RUN FOR MY LIFE.

WHICH ONLY MAKES THINGS WORSE...

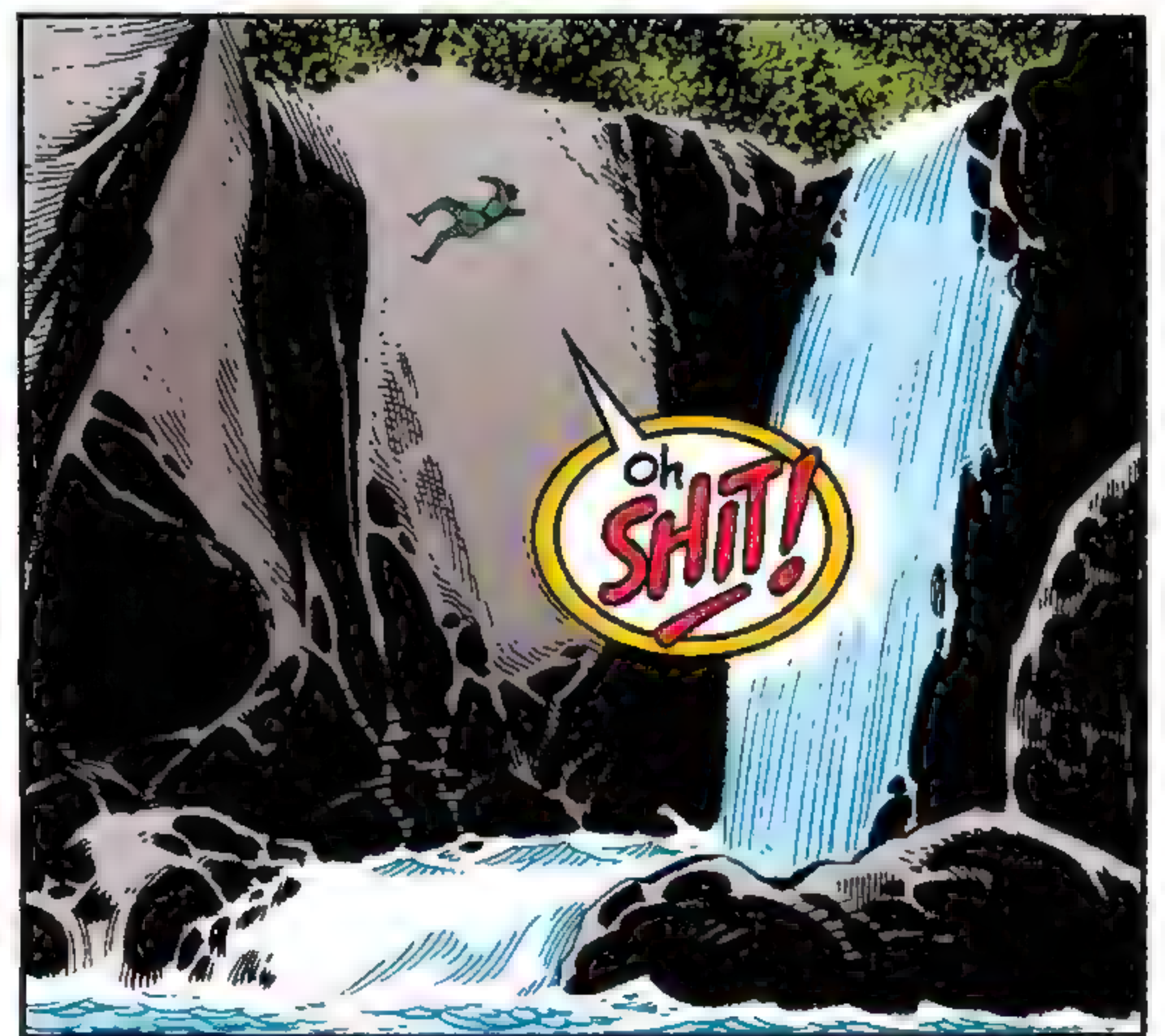


...AS I TAKE A TUMBLE OFF THE TRAIL...

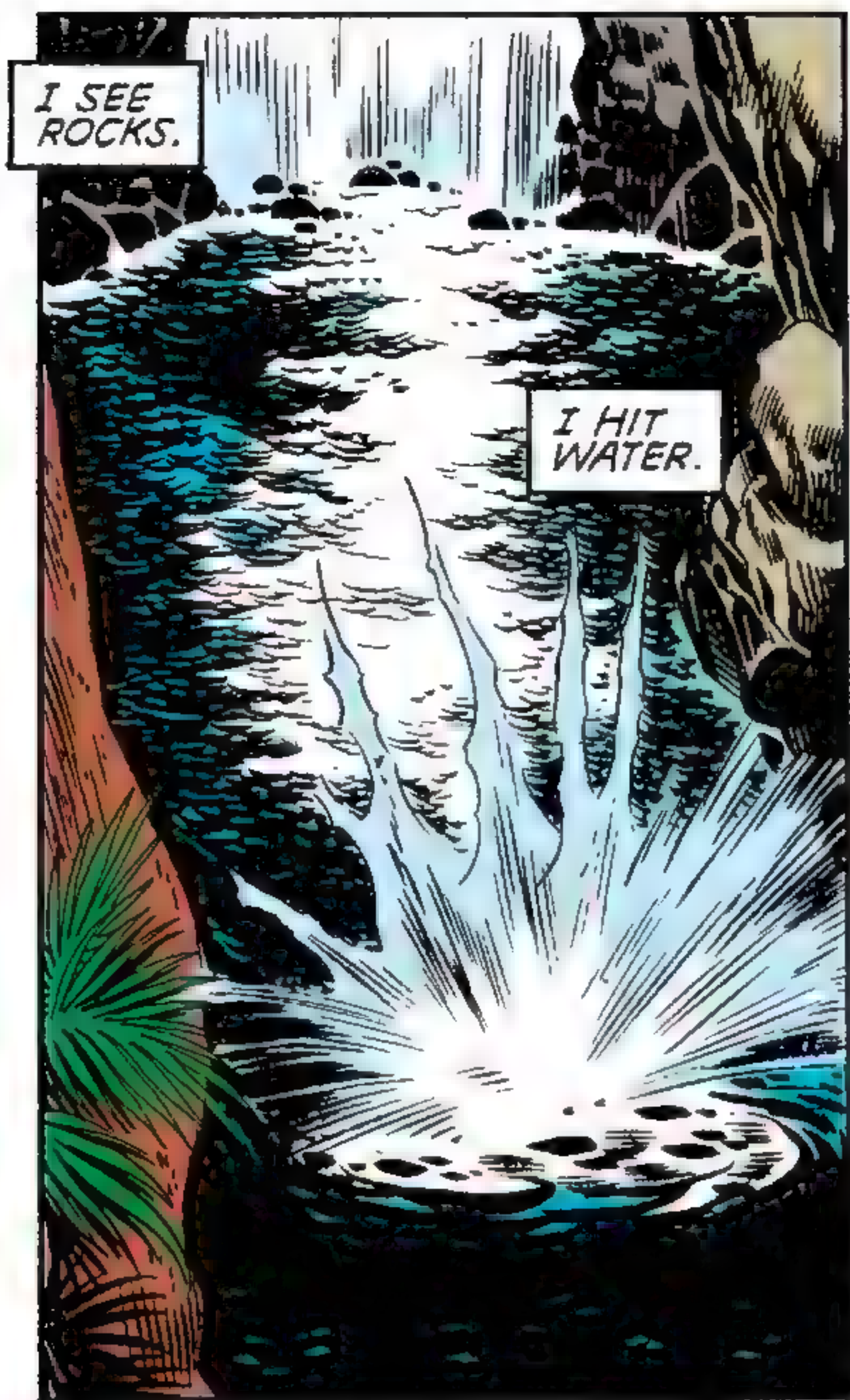


YYII!

...AND DOWN A SLOPE SO STEEP IT'S ALMOST VERTICAL!

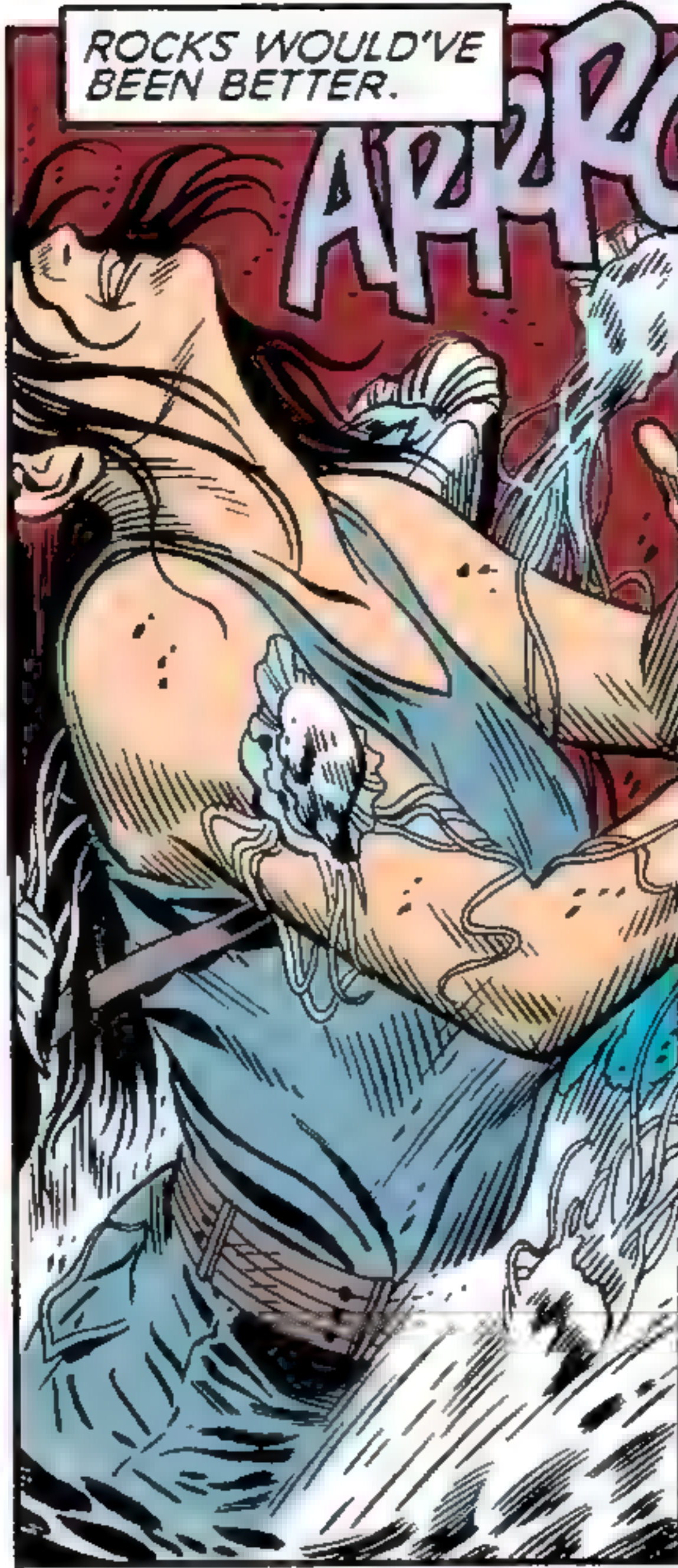


Oh SHIT!



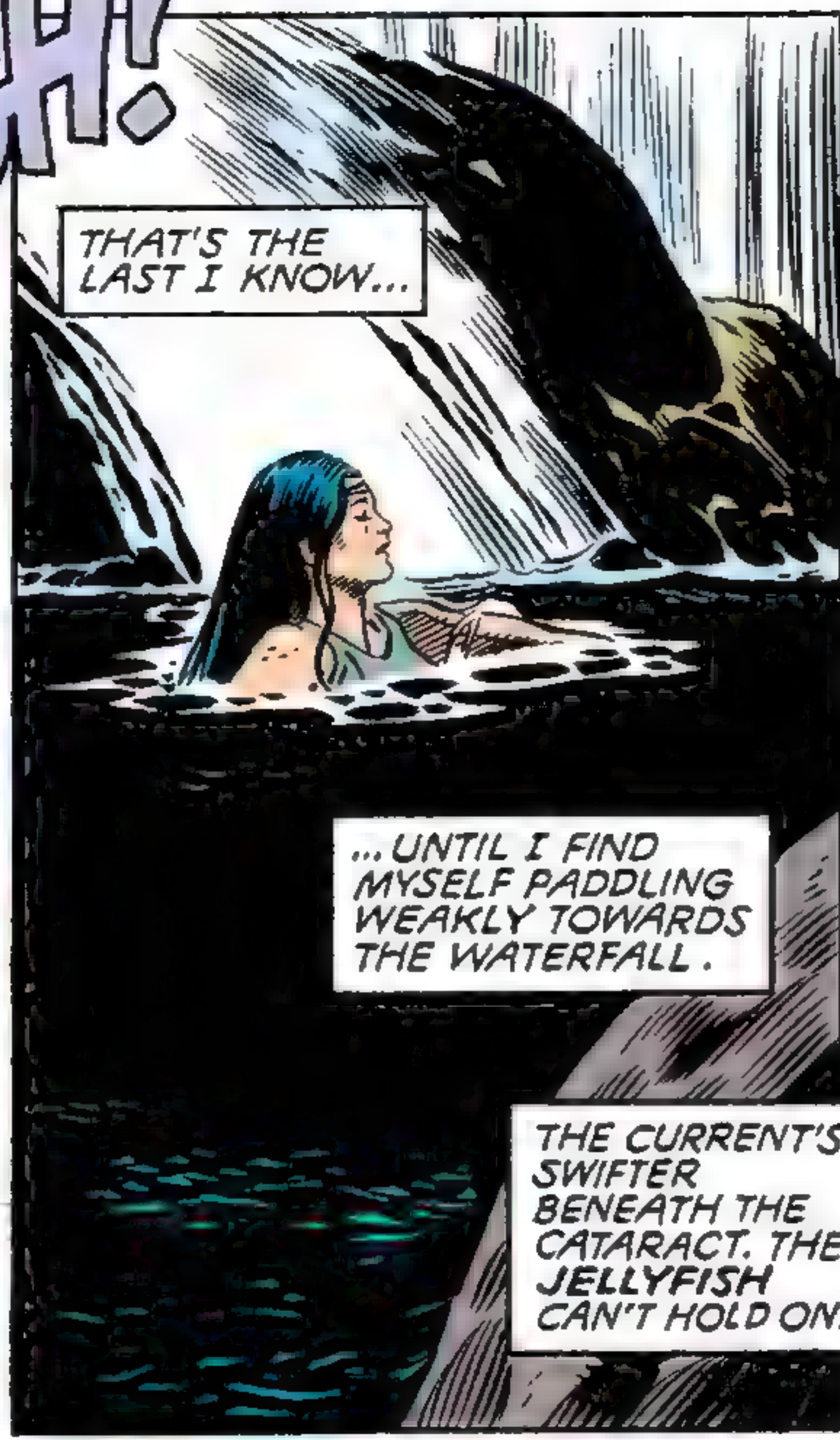
I SEE ROCKS.

I HIT WATER.



ROCKS WOULD'VE BEEN BETTER.

APRRGH!



THAT'S THE LAST I KNOW...

...UNTIL I FIND MYSELF PADDLING WEAKLY TOWARDS THE WATERFALL.

THE CURRENT'S SWIFTER BENEATH THE CATARACT. THE JELLYFISH CAN'T HOLD ON.



ALL THE WHILE...

...I'M WAITING FOR MY NEMESIS TO FOLLOW MY SCREAM...



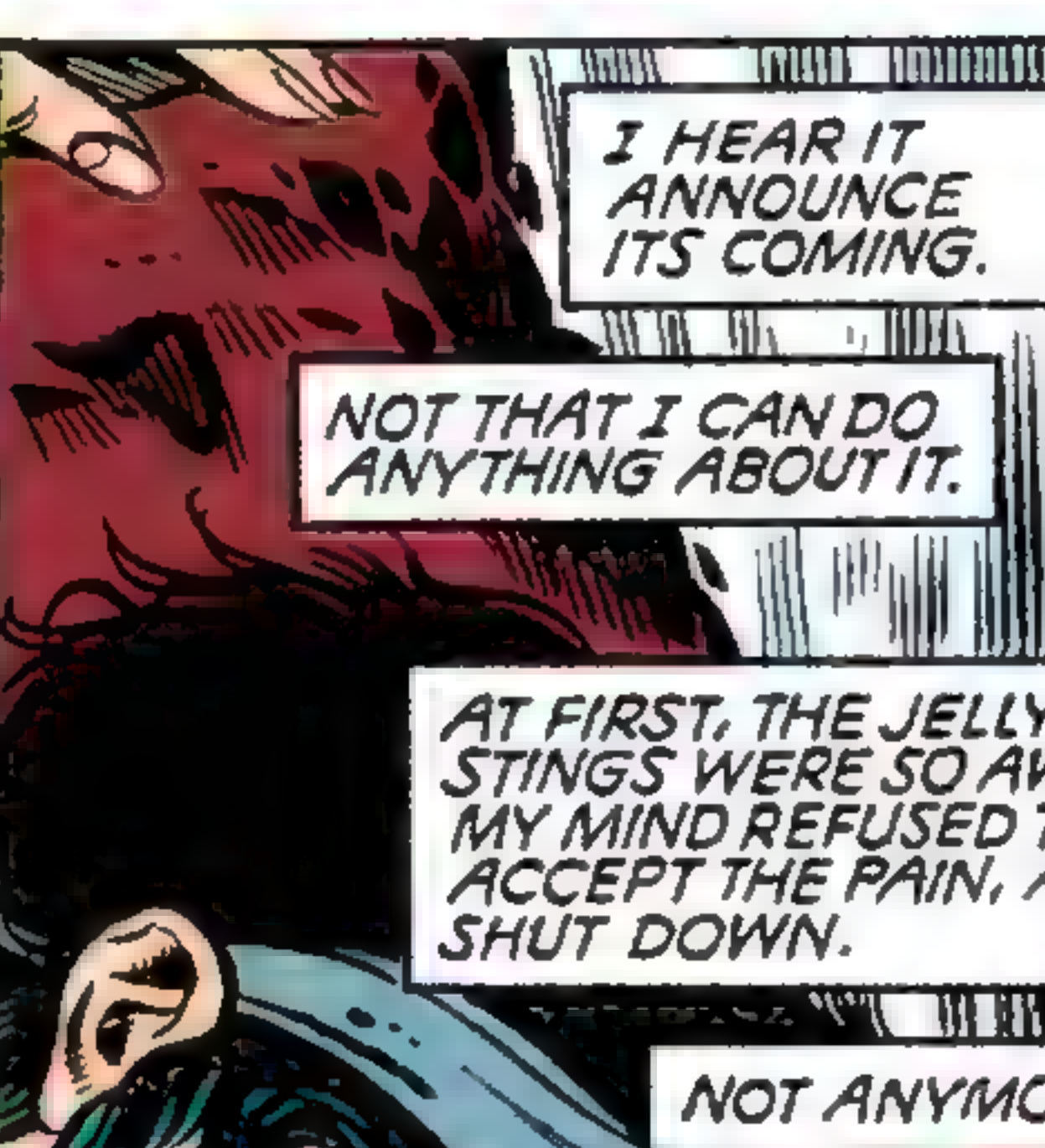
... AND FINISH ME OFF.



NEVER IMAGINED I WASN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO GOT HURT.



GRRAWR!



I HEAR IT ANNOUNCE ITS COMING.

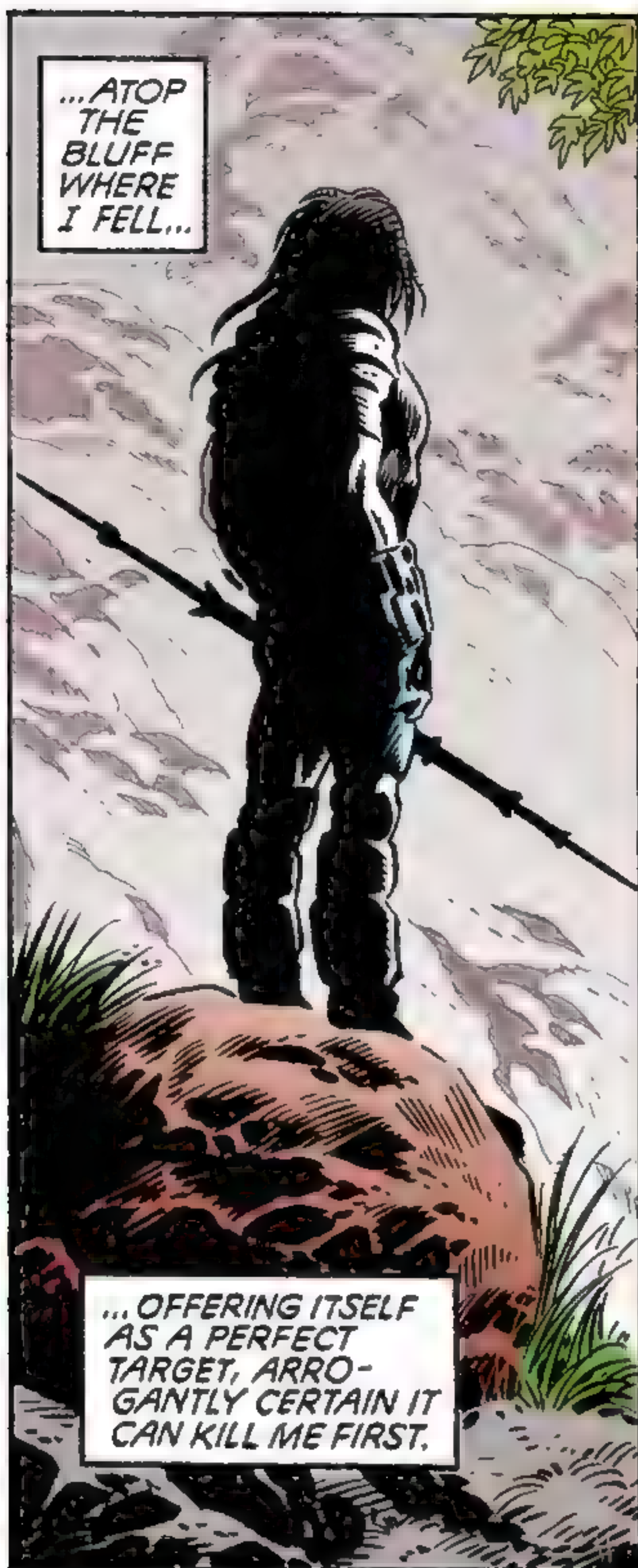
NOT THAT I CAN DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.

AT FIRST, THE JELLYFISH STINGS WERE SO AWFUL, MY MIND REFUSED TO ACCEPT THE PAIN, AND SHUT DOWN.

NOT ANYMORE.



THAT'S WHEN I SEE IT...



...ATOP
THE
BLUFF
WHERE
I FELL...

... OFFERING ITSELF
AS A PERFECT
TARGET, ARRO-
GANTLY CERTAIN IT
CAN KILL ME FIRST.



I WISH I
COULD TRY.

BUT NOW THAT THE
INITIAL SHOCK OF
THE JELLYFISH
VENOM'S WEARING
OFF, I HURT SO
BADLY I CAN
BARELY BREATHE.

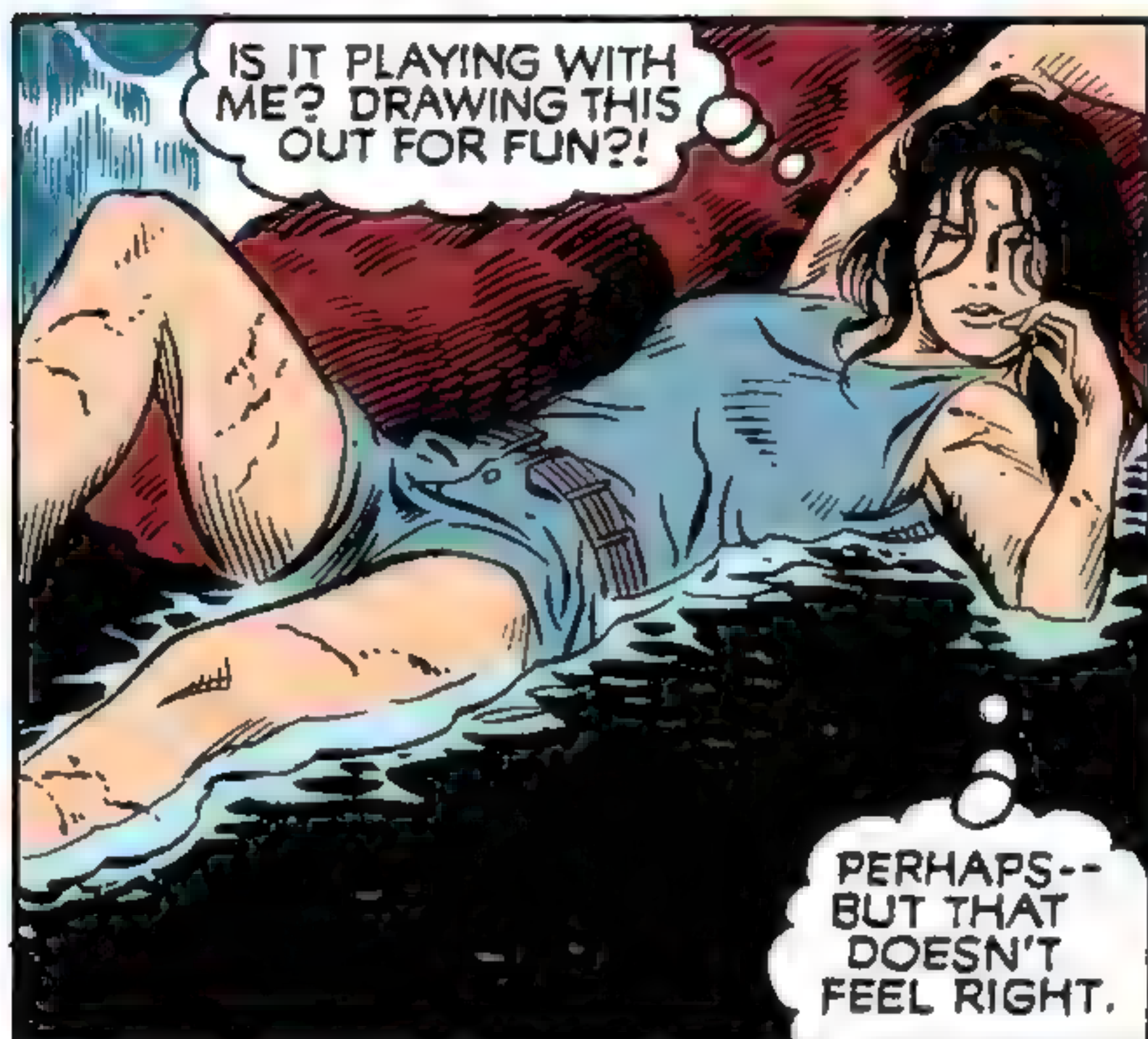
I COULDN'T MAKE
A SOUND-- OR A
MOVE-- IF I WANTED
TO. I'M AMAZED MY
HEART'S STILL BEATING.



WHY'S
IT STILL
LOOKING?

I'M IN
PLAIN
SIGHT!

IT'S
GOING
AWAY!



IS IT PLAYING WITH
ME? DRAWING THIS
OUT FOR FUN?!

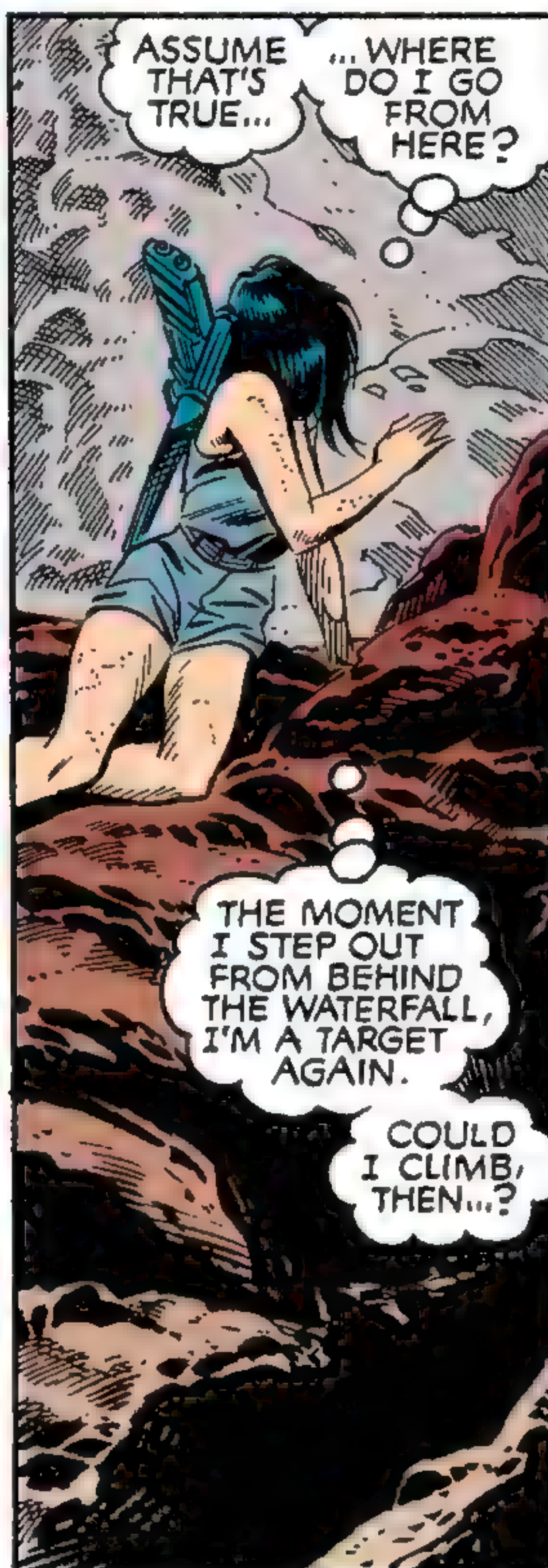
PERHAPS--
BUT THAT
DOESN'T
FEEL RIGHT.



ASSUME
IT CAN
SEE. BUT MAYBE
NOT THE WAY
WE DO.

IF THE CREATURE
TRACKS HEAT
EMANATIONS, MY
BODY'S GROWN SO
COLD LYING
HERE...

... IT MUST
BE FAIRLY
INDISTINGUISH-
ABLE FROM
THE BACK-
GROUND ROCKS.



ASSUME
THAT'S
TRUE...

... WHERE
DO I GO
FROM
HERE?

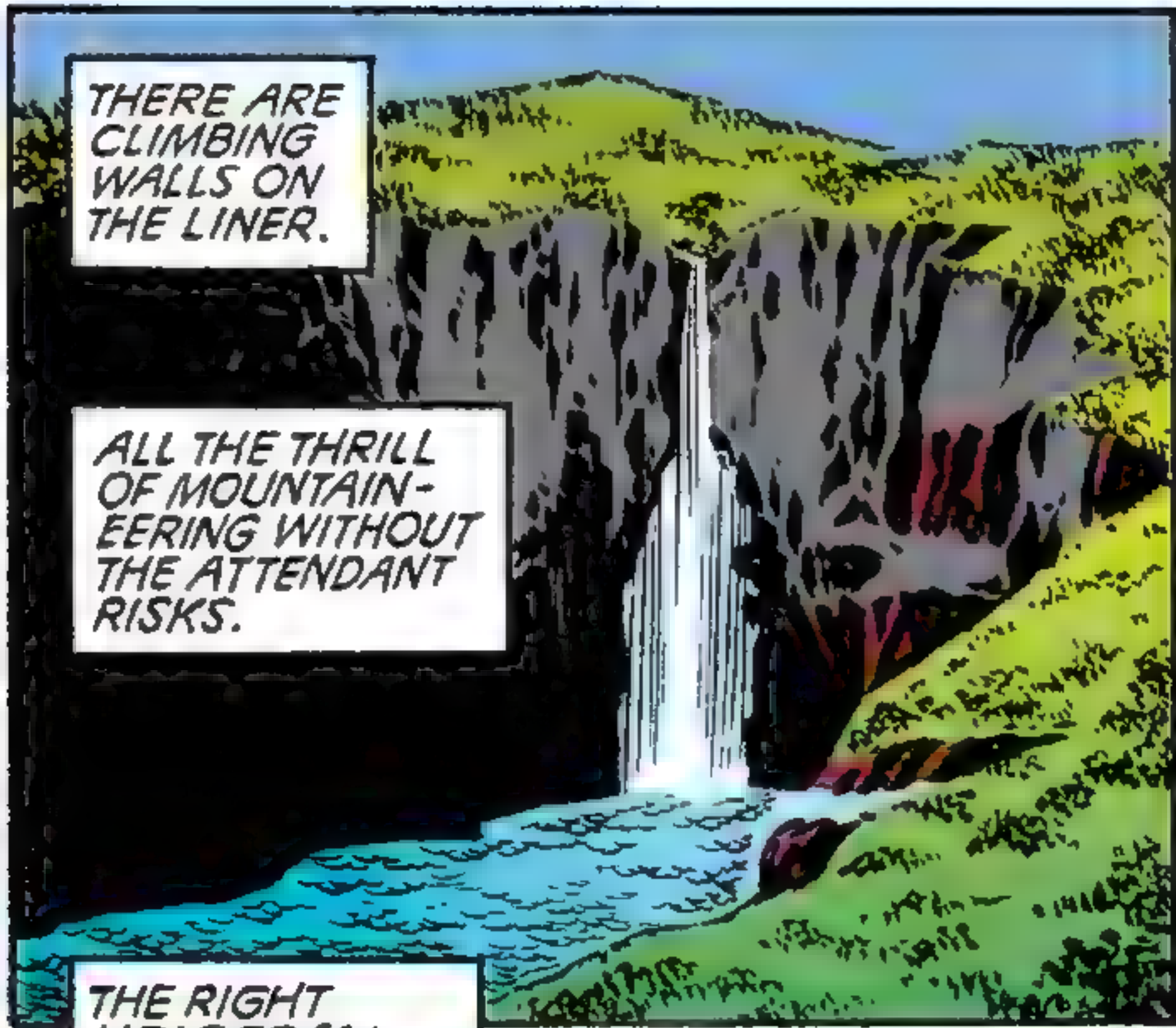
THE MOMENT
I STEP OUT
FROM BEHIND
THE WATERFALL,
I'M A TARGET
AGAIN.

COULD
I CLIMB,
THEN...?



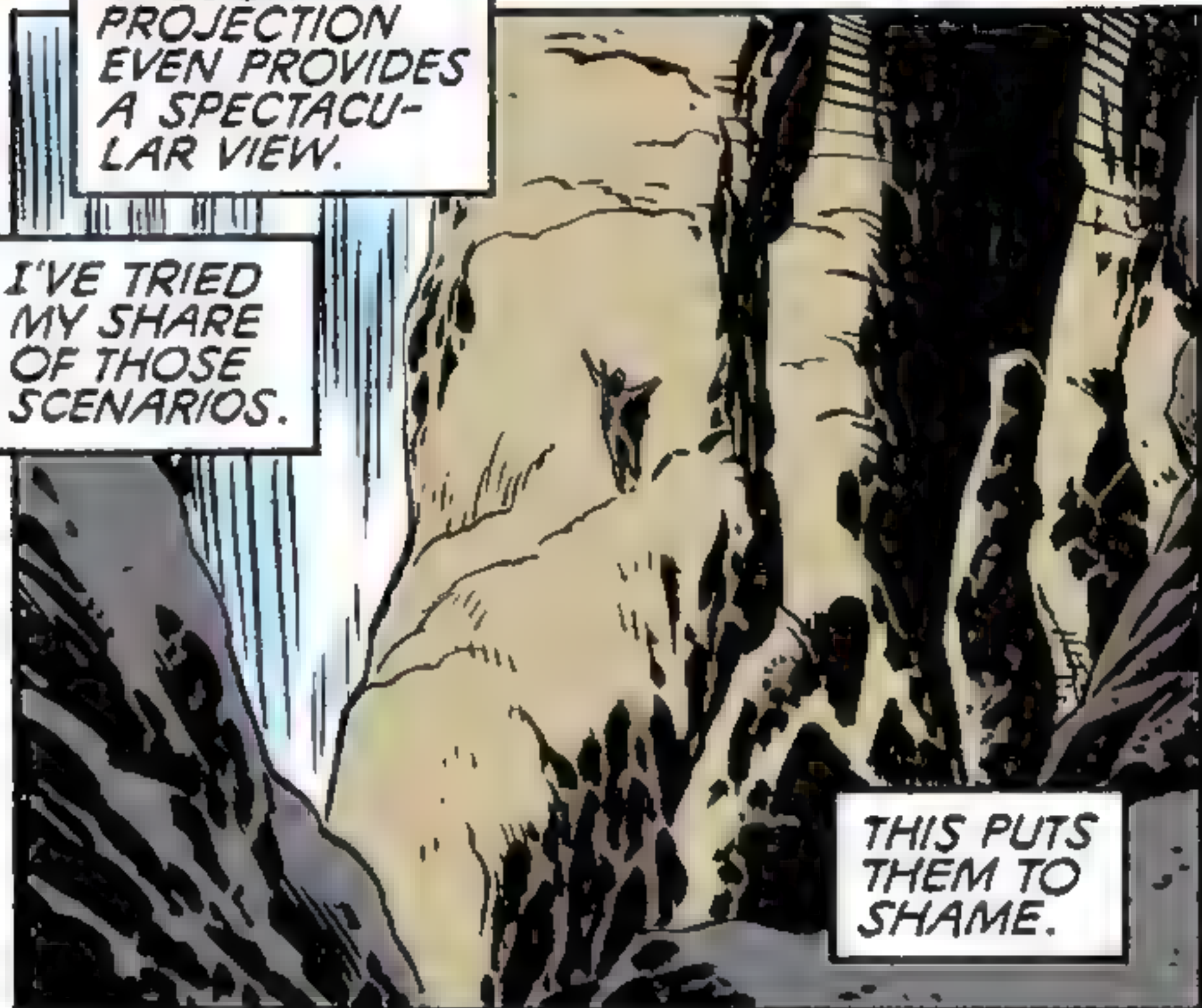
BLIND,
THEN?

IT SAW ME WELL
ENOUGH IN THE DARK,
AND FOLLOWED MY
TRAIL PRETTY DARN
EASILY.



THERE ARE CLIMBING WALLS ON THE LINER.

ALL THE THRILL OF MOUNTAIN-EERING WITHOUT THE ATTENDANT RISKS.



THE RIGHT HOLOGRAM PROJECTION EVEN PROVIDES A SPECTACULAR VIEW.

I'VE TRIED MY SHARE OF THOSE SCENARIOS.

THIS PUTS THEM TO SHAME.



EVERY TIME I CONSIDER QUITTING, I THINK OF MY HUNTER--NO, THE WORD FOR IT, THE ONLY WORD, IS PREDATOR--AND I PUSH THAT MUCH HARDER.

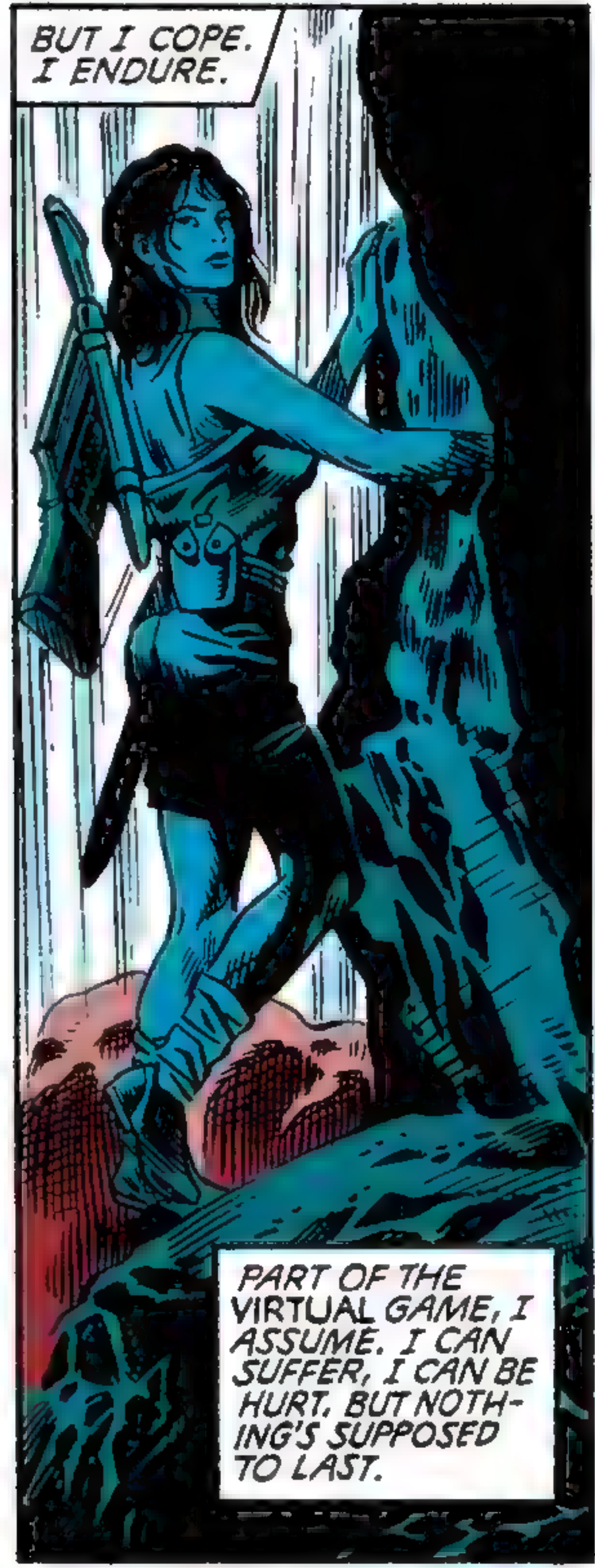
I WANT ITS HEAD ON A PIKE.



I'VE NEVER FELT SUCH EMOTIONS BEFORE. THEY SCARE ME--

--IN NO SMALL MEASURE BECAUSE THEY FEEL SO GOOD.

NOT SO, MY BODY. IN FAIRLY SHORT ORDER, I COLLECT A WHOLE NEW CATALOG OF MISERIES TO REPLACE THE OLD.



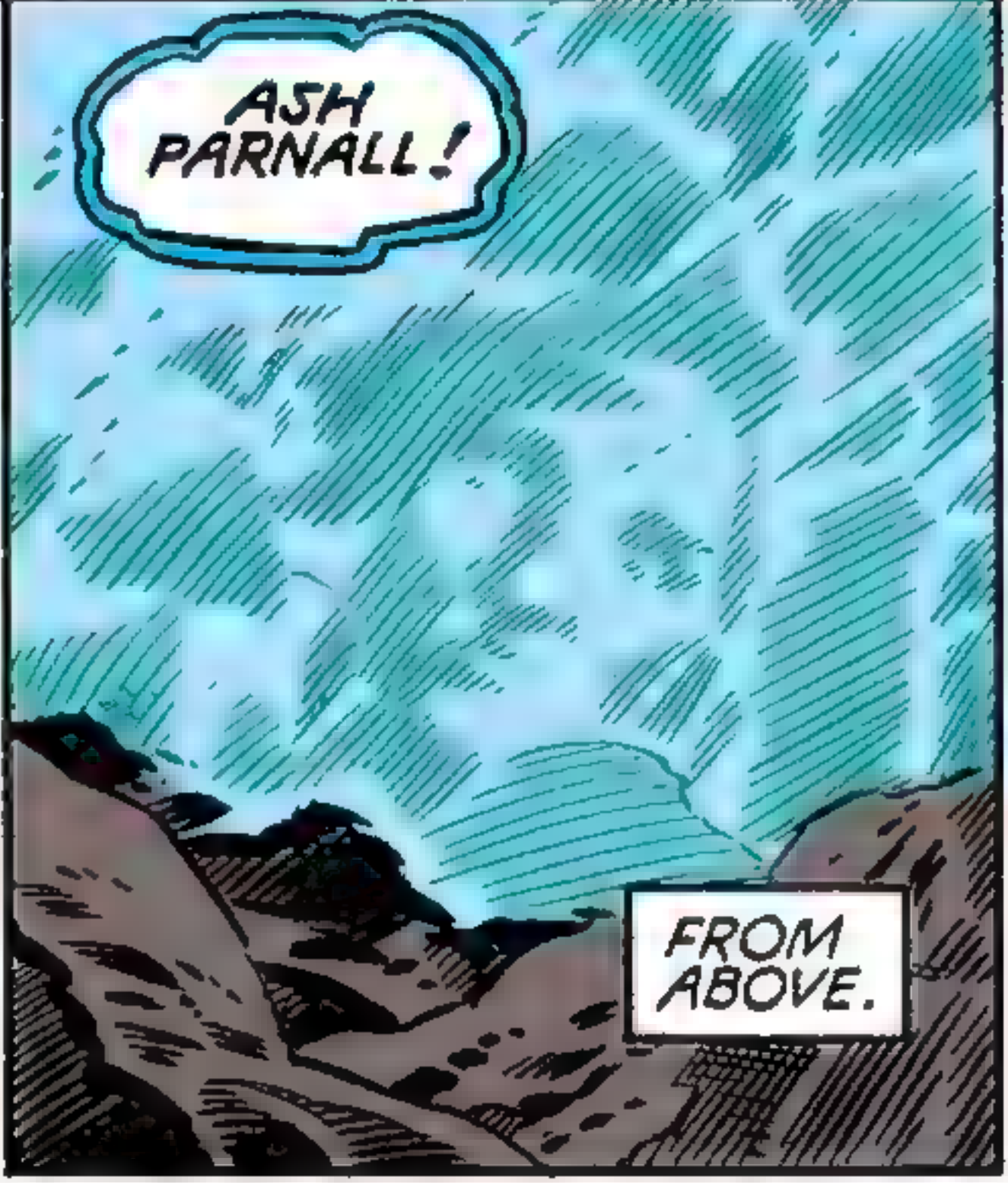
BUT I COPE. I ENDURE.

PART OF THE VIRTUAL GAME, I ASSUME. I CAN SUFFER, I CAN BE HURT, BUT NOTHING'S SUPPOSED TO LAST.



ASH!

A WOMAN'S VOICE.

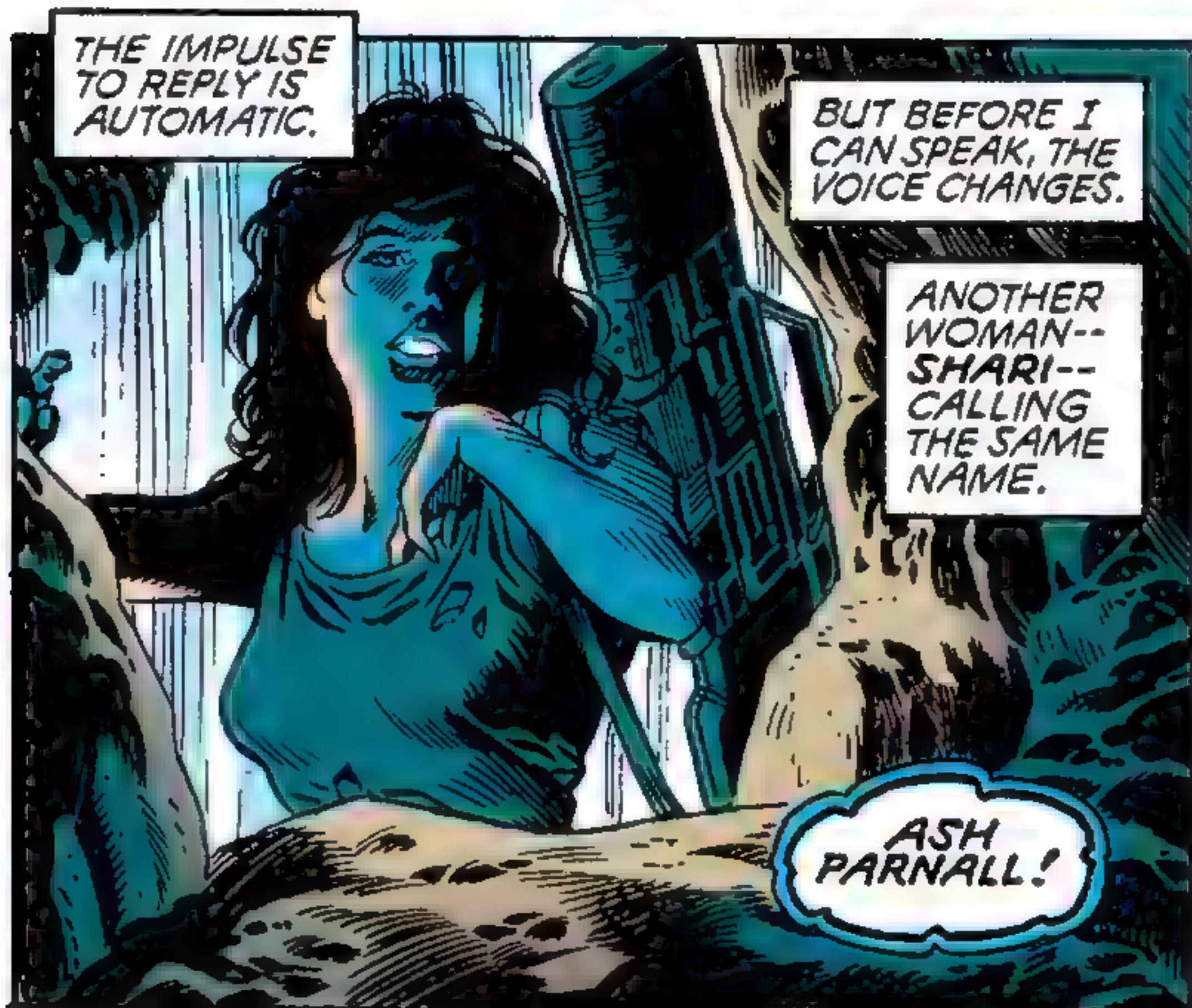


ASH PARNALL!

FROM ABOVE.



AS ACHINGLY FAMILIAR AS THE FACE REFLECTED IN THE WATER BEFORE ME: THIS OTHER FACE THAT HAUNTS MY NIGHTMARES.

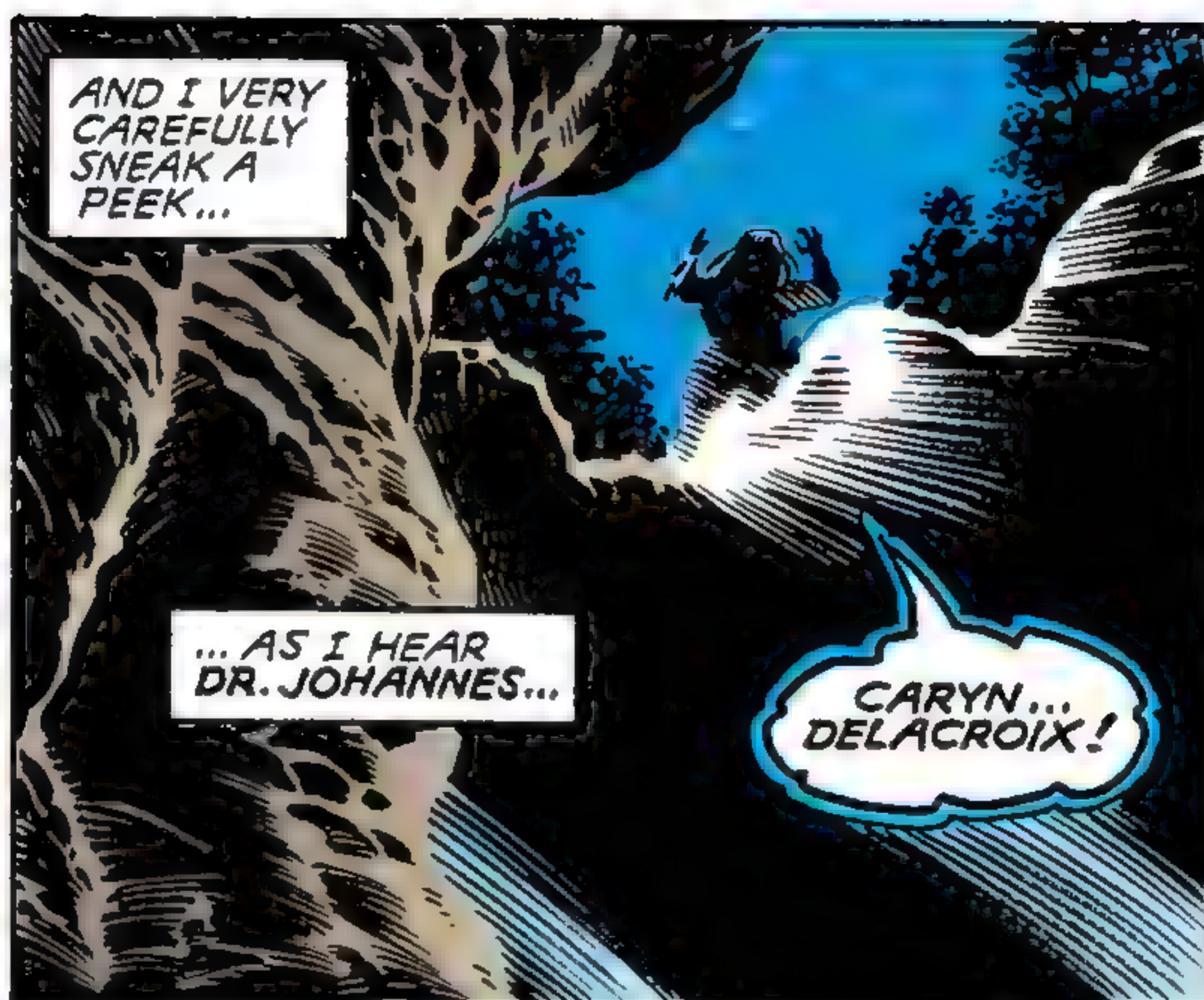


THE IMPULSE
TO REPLY IS
AUTOMATIC.

BUT BEFORE I
CAN SPEAK, THE
VOICE CHANGES.

ANOTHER
WOMAN--
SHARI--
CALLING
THE SAME
NAME.

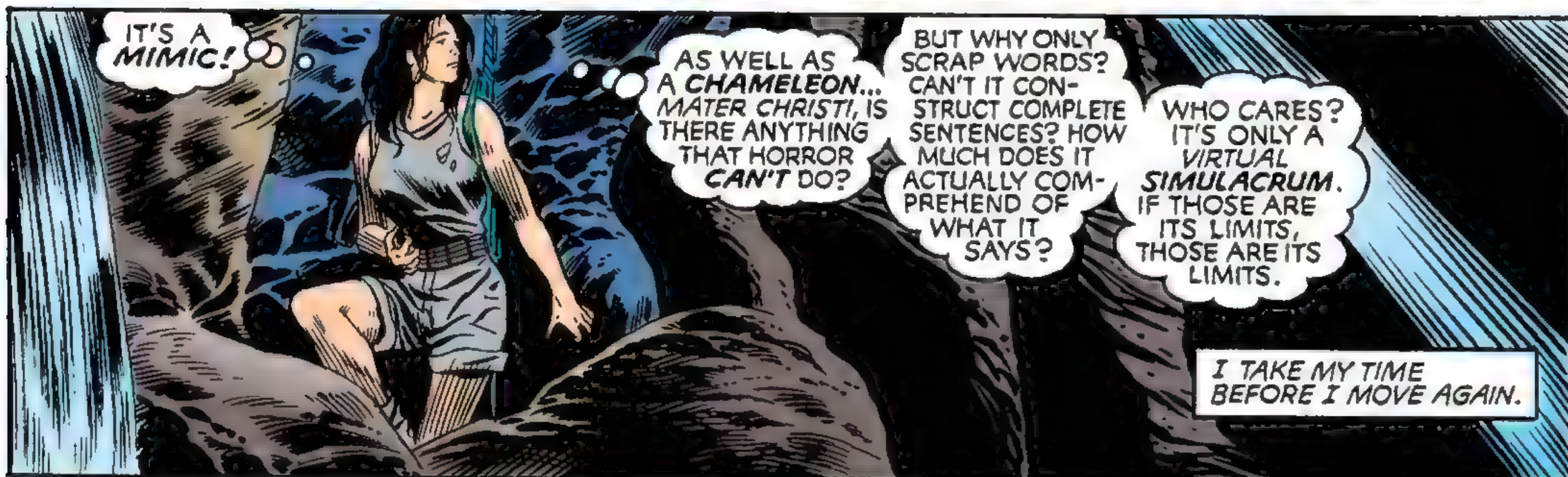
ASH
PARNALL!



AND I VERY
CAREFULLY
SNEAK A
PEEK...

... AS I HEAR
DR. JOHANNES...

CARYN...
DELACROIX!



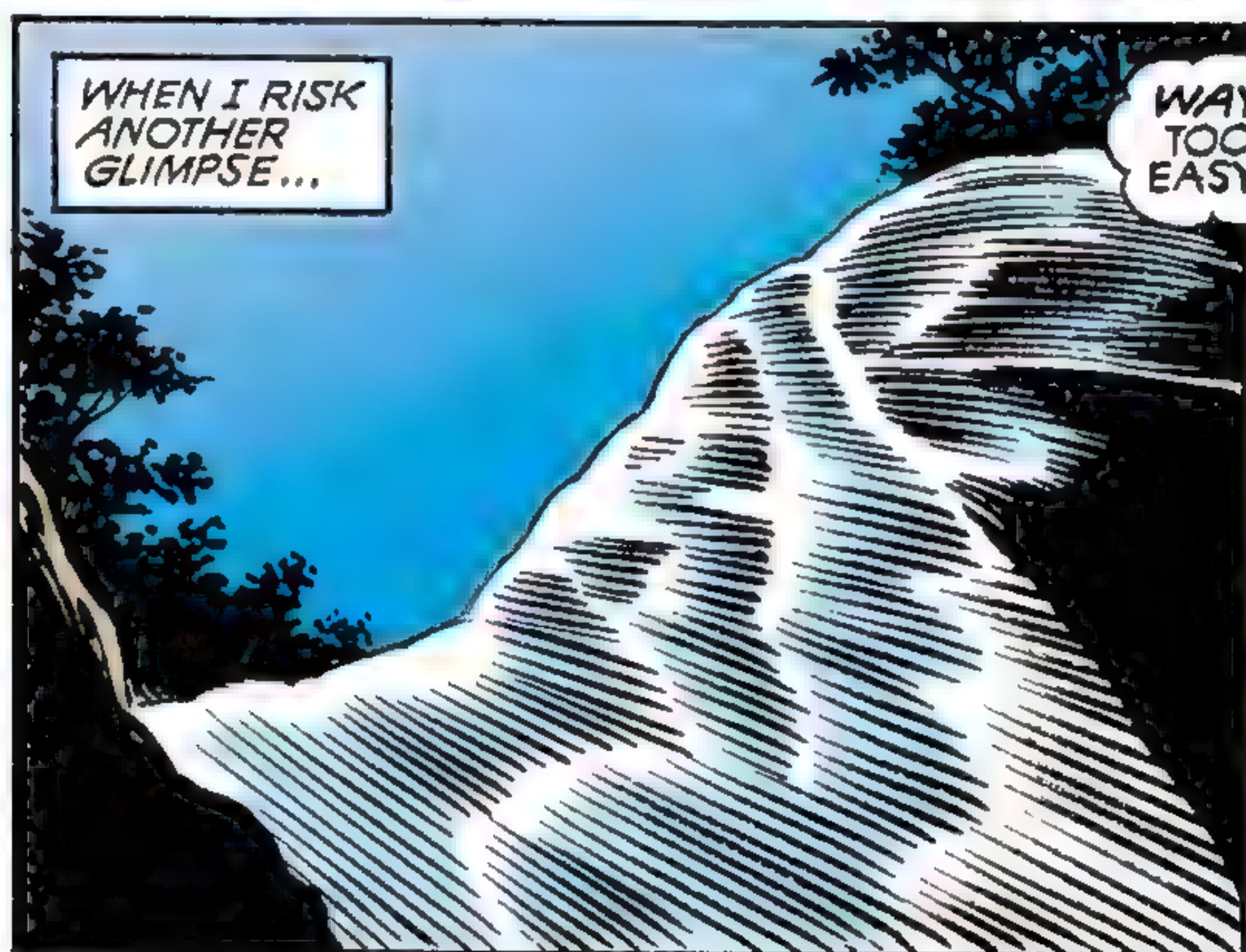
IT'S A
MIMIC!

AS WELL AS
A CHAMELEON...
MATER CHRISTI, IS
THERE ANYTHING
THAT HORROR
CAN'T DO?

BUT WHY ONLY
SCRAP WORDS?
CAN'T IT CON-
STRUCT COMPLETE
SENTENCES? HOW
MUCH DOES IT
ACTUALLY COM-
PREHEND OF
WHAT IT
SAYS?

WHO CARES?
IT'S ONLY A
VIRTUAL
SIMULACRUM.
IF THOSE ARE
ITS LIMITS,
THOSE ARE ITS
LIMITS.

I TAKE MY TIME
BEFORE I MOVE AGAIN.



WHEN I RISK
ANOTHER
GLIMPSE...

WAY
TOO
EASY.

HOWEVER IT SPEAKS, IT
THINKS. LIKE A HUNTER. IT
KNEW I WENT IN THE POOL,
AND WHEN IT COULDN'T
FIND ME ANYWHERE
ELSE...

... IT DETERMINED
THE ONLY
LOGICAL
ALTERNATIVE.

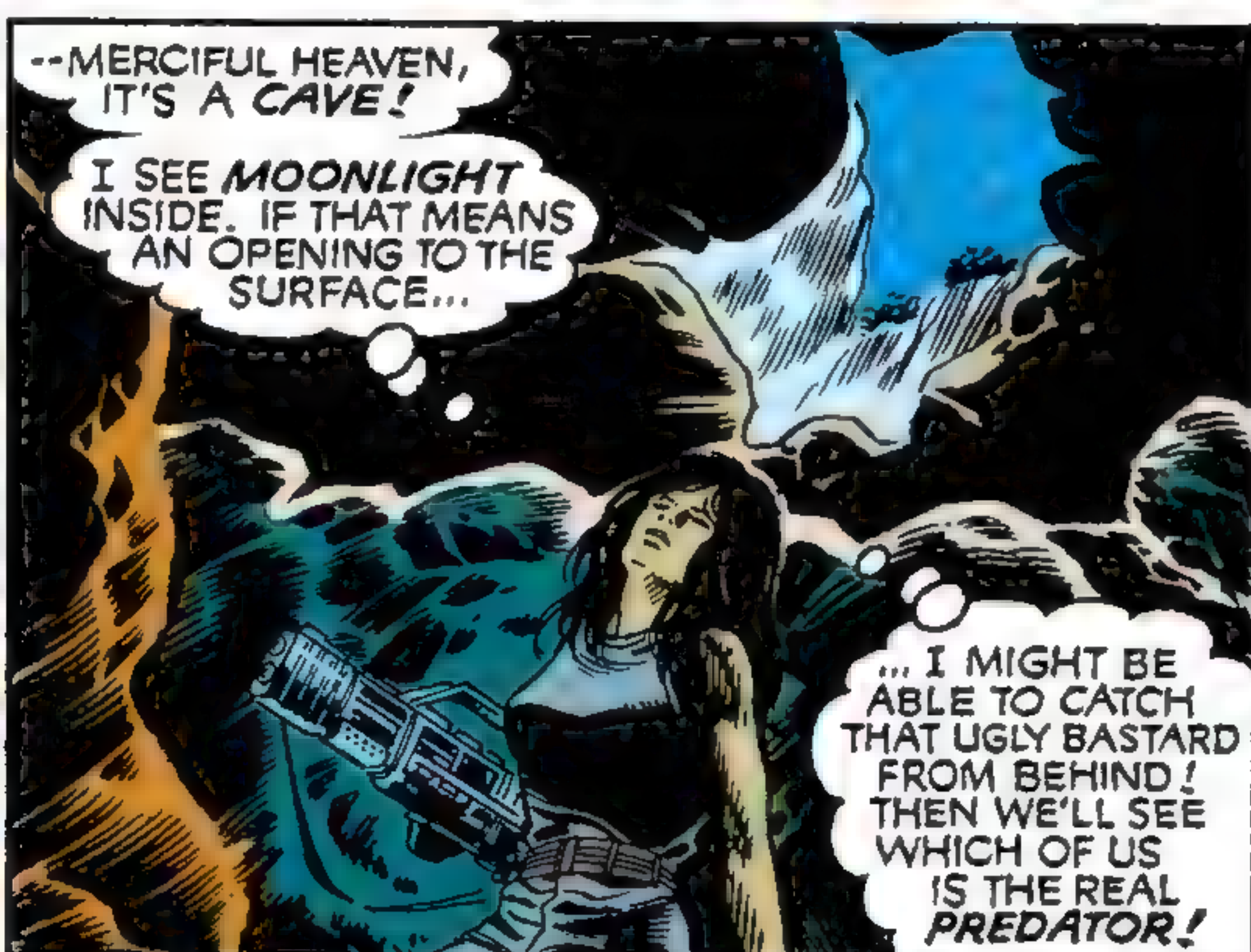
CAN'T GO
UP, CAN'T
GO DOWN--
I'LL BE A CLEAR
TARGET EITHER
WAY.



CAN I SCOOT SIDWAYS
ALONG THIS LEDGE?

WHAT'S
THIS?

SOME SORT
OF OPENING IN
THE ROCK--

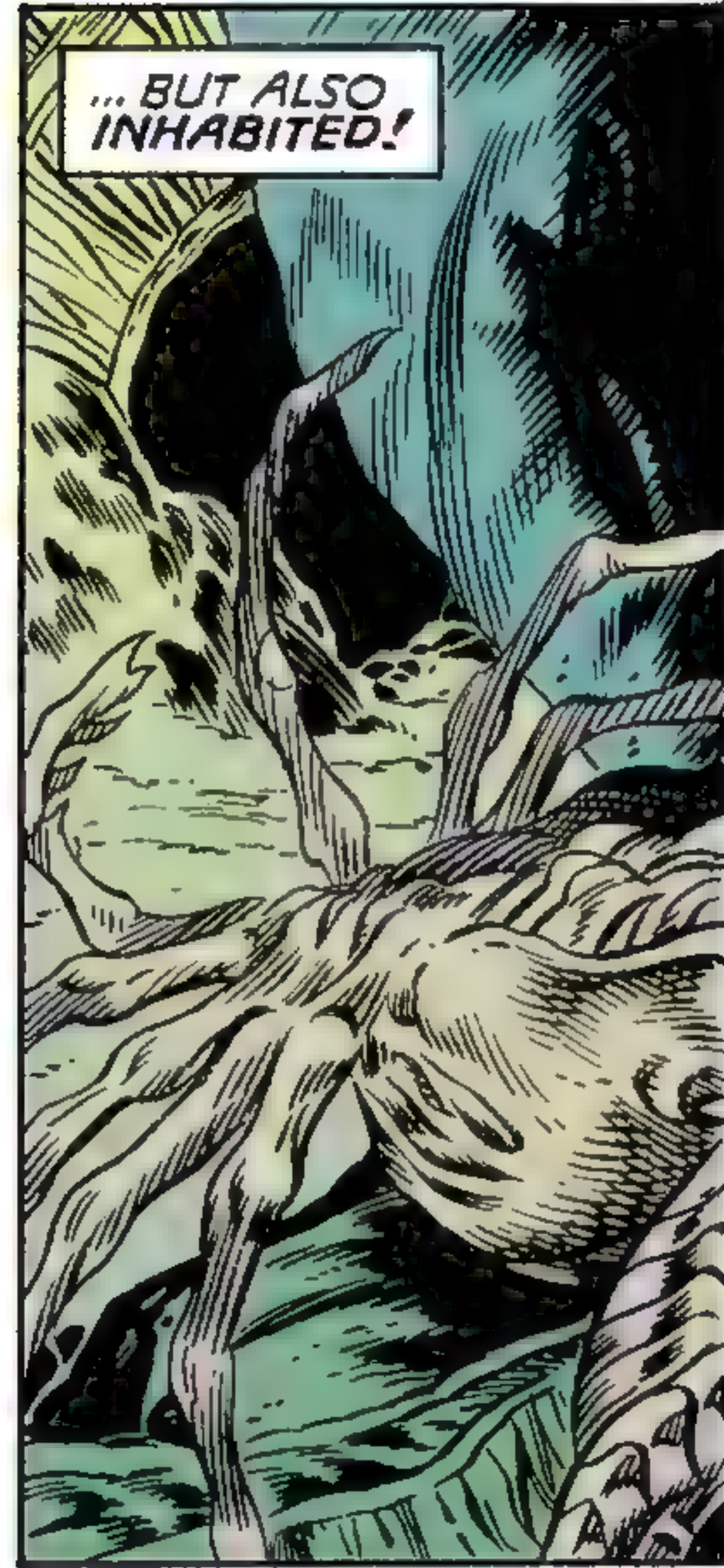
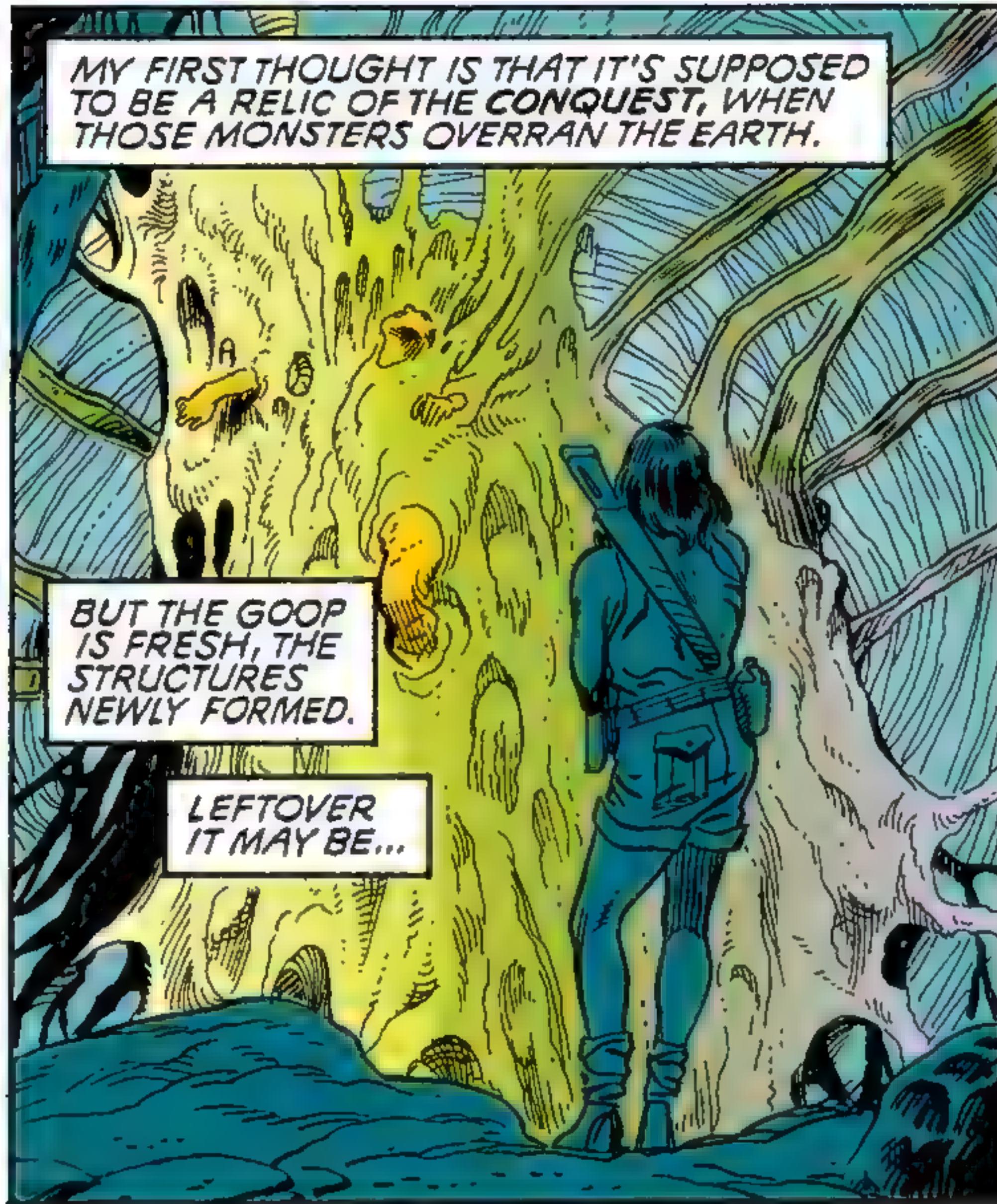


--MERCIFUL HEAVEN,
IT'S A CAVE!

I SEE MOONLIGHT
INSIDE. IF THAT MEANS
AN OPENING TO THE
SURFACE...

... I MIGHT BE
ABLE TO CATCH
THAT UGLY BASTARD
FROM BEHIND!
THEN WE'LL SEE
WHICH OF US
IS THE REAL
PREDATOR!

MY ELATION LASTS UNTIL I'M WELL AND TRULY INSIDE. UNTIL I REALIZE THAT TOY-- DAMN HIS ELECTRONIC SOUL-- HAS KICKED THE GAME UP ANOTHER LEVEL.



THE ALIENS CAME WHEN EVERYONE WAS ASLEEP. HE DIDN'T SEE WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS PARENTS, WHICH IS PROBABLY FOR THE BEST.

I DON'T ASK ABOUT THE "FACEHUGGER." I ONLY PRAY WE REACH A QUARANTINE STATION IN TIME.

OUR ADVANTAGE IS THAT, SINCE BUGS PREFER TO HUNT BY NIGHT, THE NEST IS PROBABLY EMPTY.

IF WE CAN GET WELL CLEAR BY MORNING, WE SHOULD BE ALL RIGHT. THEY WON'T RISK BEING SPOTTED IN THE DAYLIGHT.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE CLIMB PROVES A LOT HARDER, AND THE DAWN COMES FAR FASTER THAN I COUNTED ON.

< ONCE WE REACH THE TOP, ANTONIO, YOU'VE GOT TO GO AS QUICKLY AS YOU CAN, UNDERSTAND ME? >

< I WILL TRY, CARYN. >

< BUT IT IS SO HARD... TO CATCH MY BREATH. >

THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE EMBRYO GROWS WITHIN THE CHEST CAVITY.

DAMN IT, NO! I'LL WIN THIS YET! I'LL FIND A WAY TO SAVE YOU!

SAVE... YOU?

FANCY MEETING YOU HERE.

ASH...?

CARYN...?

I KNOW WHICH ANSWER IT WANTS...

... BUT NOT WHICH ONE WILL SAVE ME.

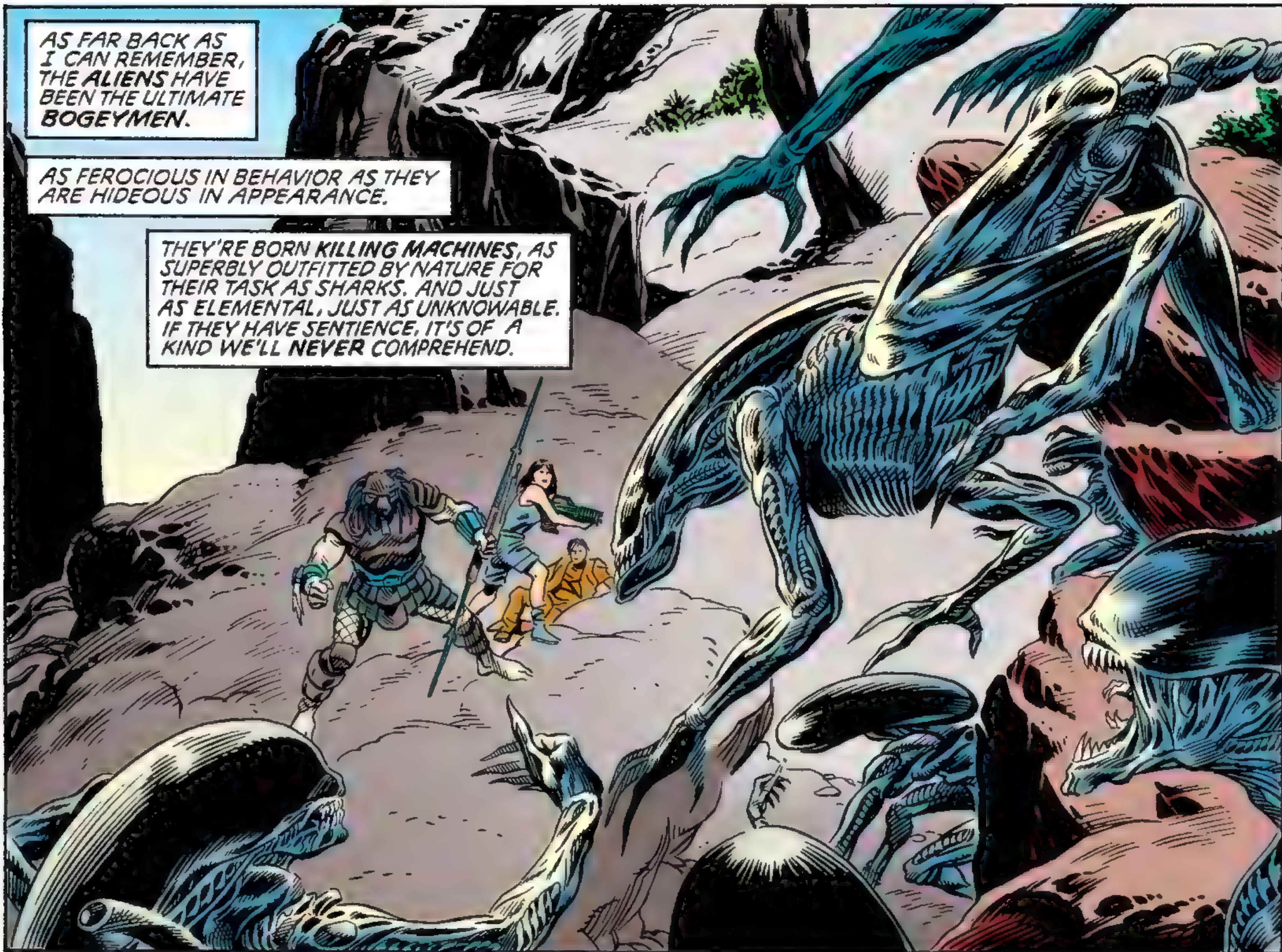
AND THEN, IT DOESN'T MATTER ANYMORE...

Oh MY GOD!

AS FAR BACK AS
I CAN REMEMBER,
THE ALIENS HAVE
BEEN THE ULTIMATE
BOGEYMEN.

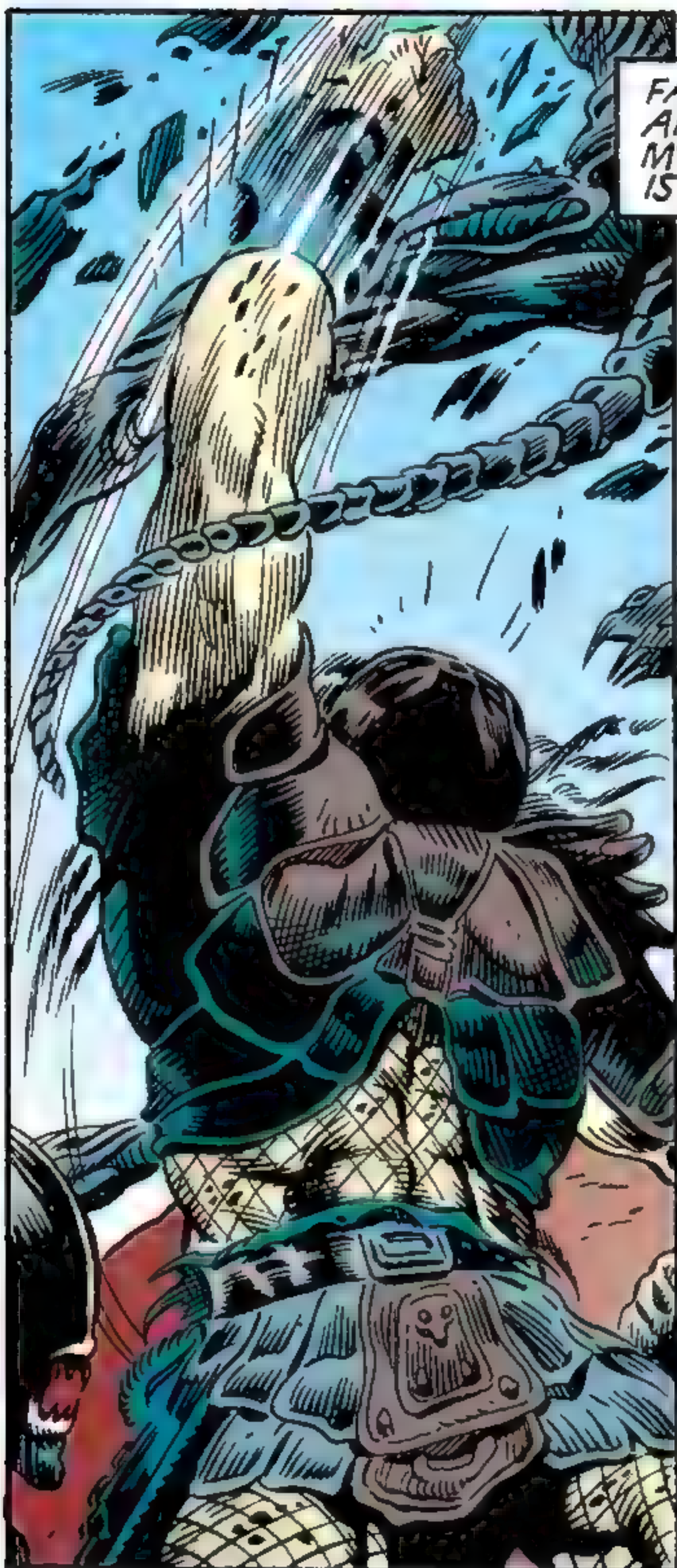
AS FEROCIOUS IN BEHAVIOR AS THEY
ARE HIDEOUS IN APPEARANCE.

THEY'RE BORN KILLING MACHINES, AS
SUPERBLY OUTFITTED BY NATURE FOR
THEIR TASK AS SHARKS. AND JUST
AS ELEMENTAL, JUST AS UNKNOWNABLE.
IF THEY HAVE SENTIENCE, IT'S OF A
KIND WE'LL NEVER COMPREHEND.



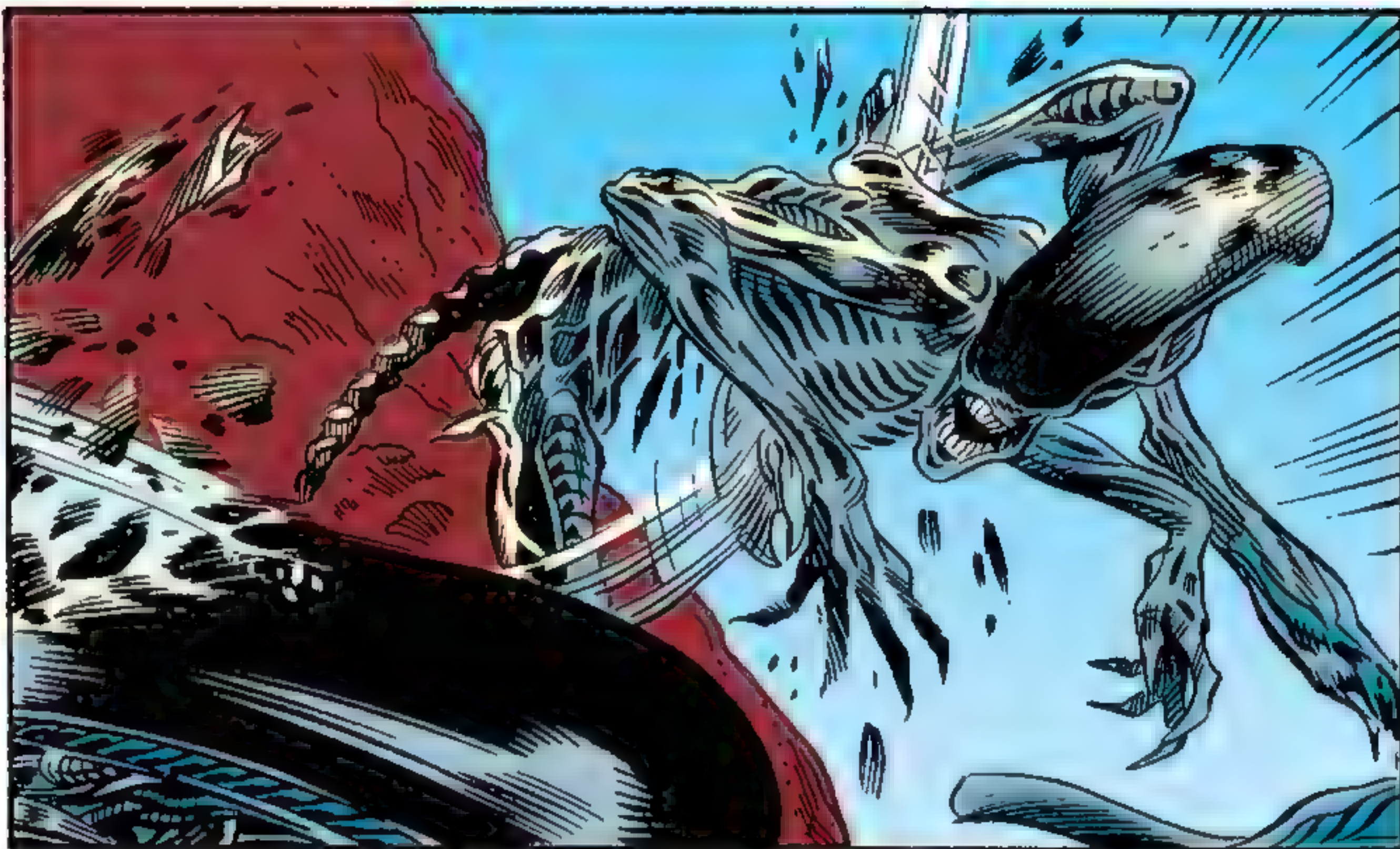
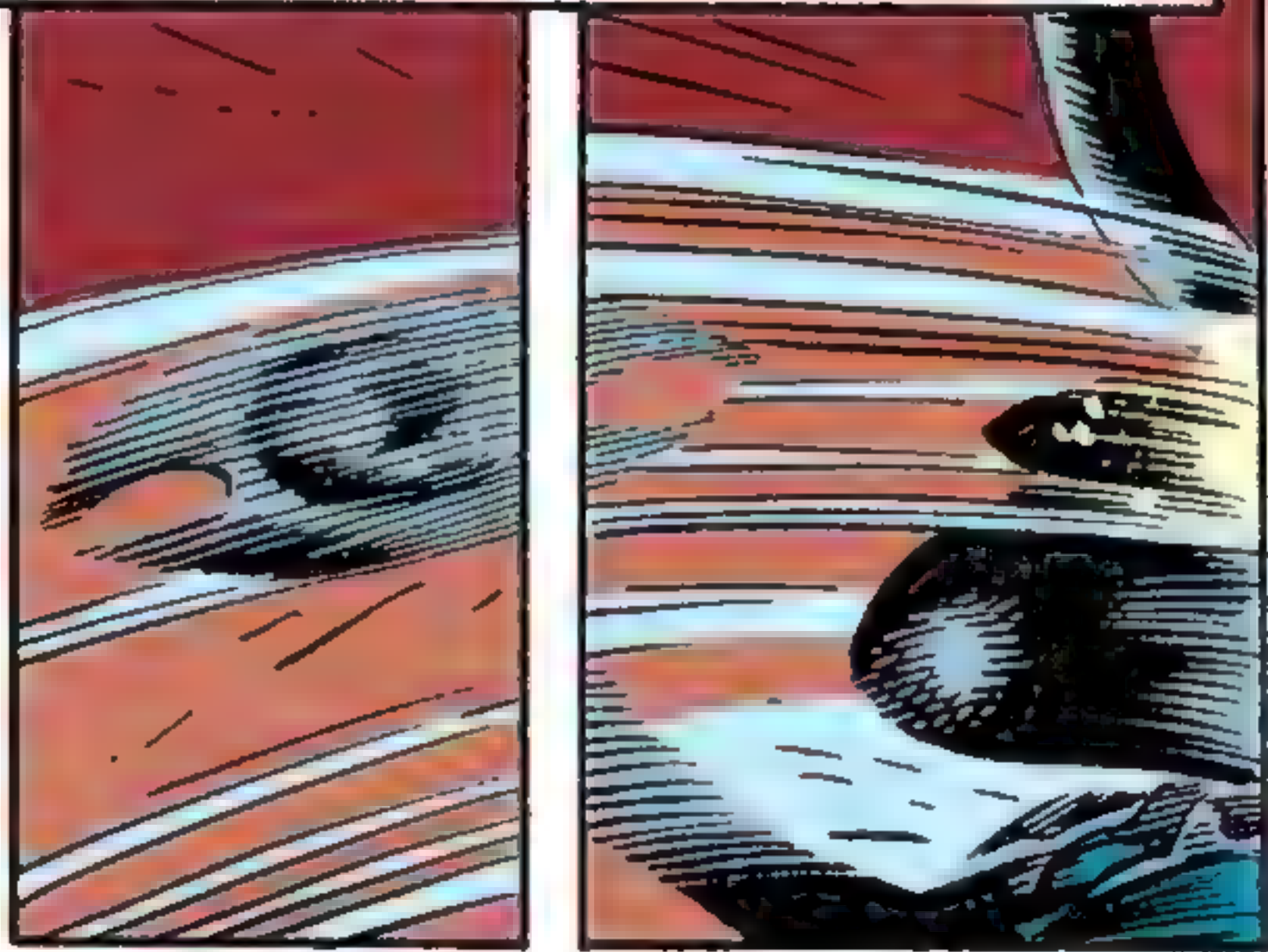
FAST AS THEY
ARE, THOUGH,
MY PREDATOR
IS FASTER.

AND, IMPOSSIBLE
AS IT SEEMS...



... EVEN
MORE
DEADLY.

THE PREDATOR FIGHTS LIKE A CREATURE POSSESSED, USING ITS WEAPONS WITH LETHAL ABANDON AND A SKILL THAT HAS TO BE SEEN TO BE BELIEVED.



I KEEP IT AT MY BACK...

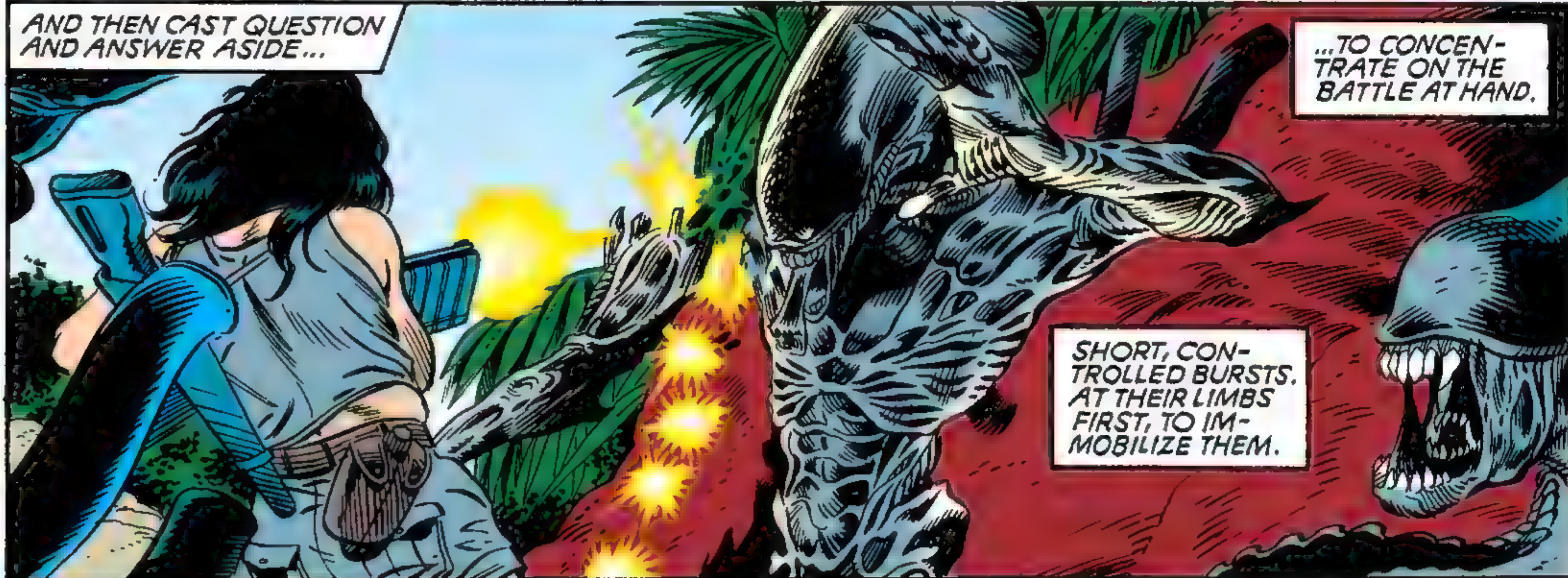
...SENSING SOMEHOW THAT IT'LL LEAVE ME BE SO LONG AS IT HAS ITS ANCIENT FOES TO FIGHT.



I WONDER HOW I KNOW THAT.

AND THEN CAST QUESTION AND ANSWER ASIDE...

...TO CONCENTRATE ON THE BATTLE AT HAND.



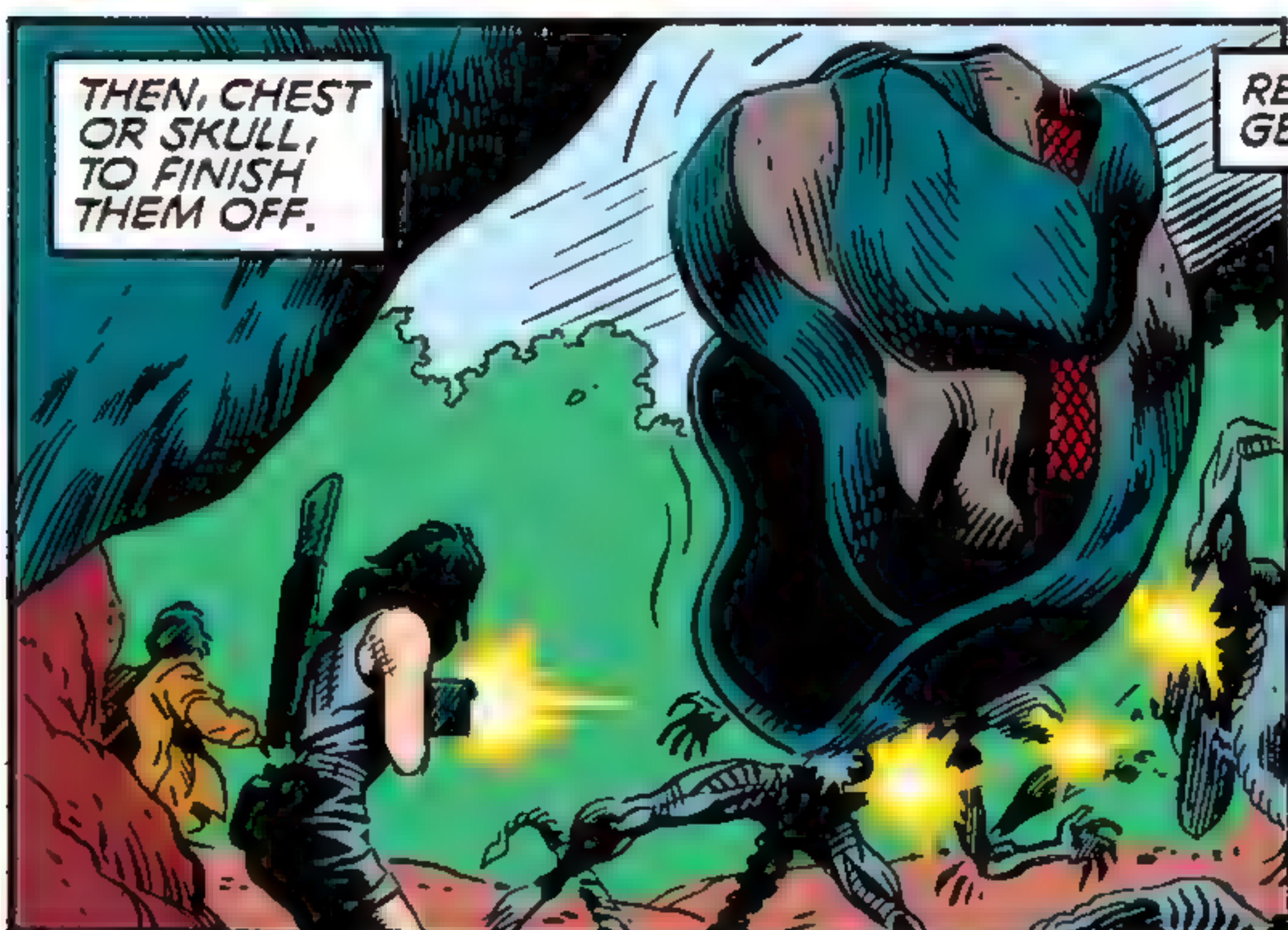
SHORT, CONTROLLED BURSTS. AT THEIR LIMBS FIRST, TO IMMOBILIZE THEM.

THEN, CHEST OR SKULL, TO FINISH THEM OFF.

REMEMBERING ALWAYS TO TAKE CARE NOT TO GET SPLASHED BY THEIR ACID BLOOD.

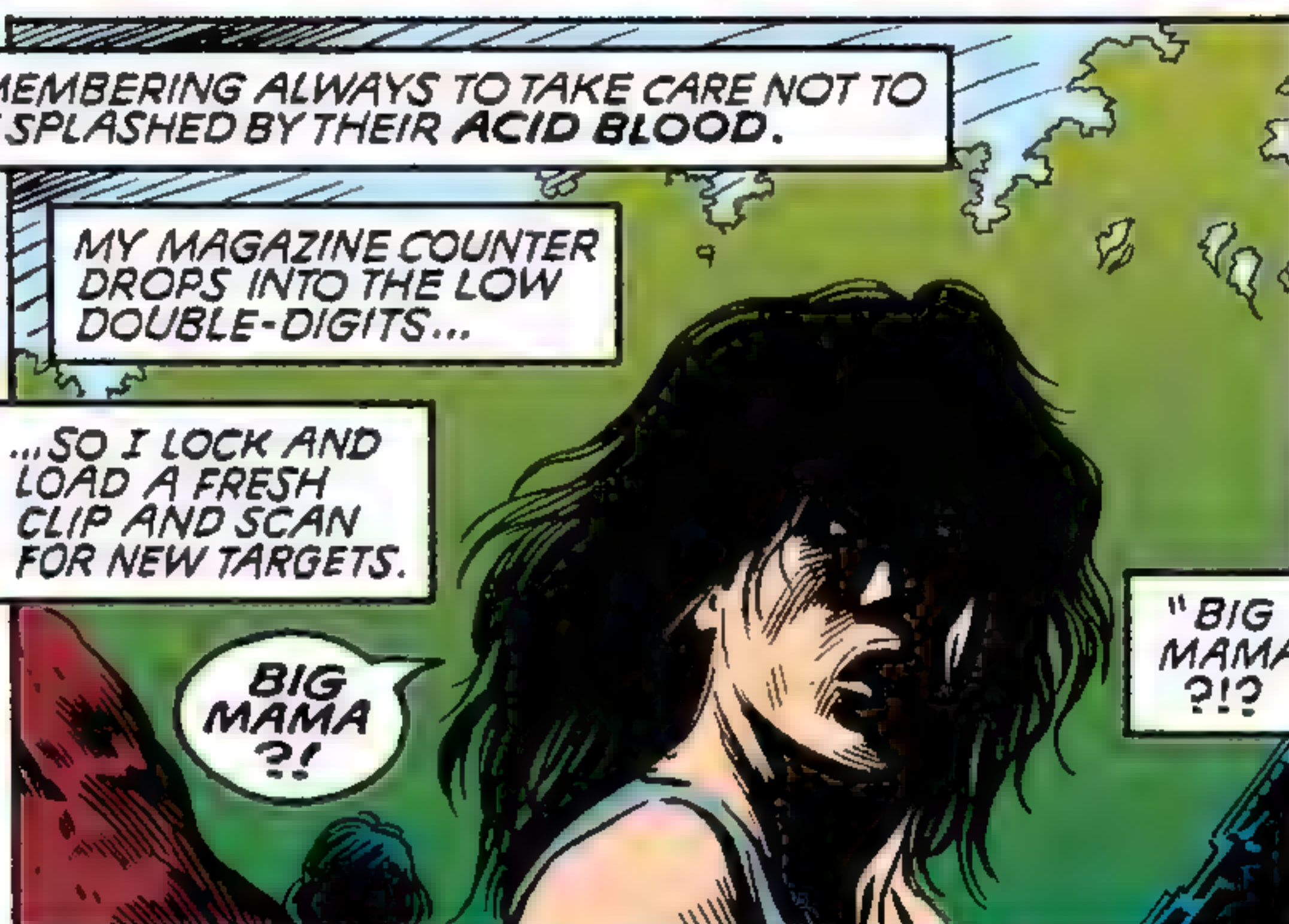
MY MAGAZINE COUNTER DROPS INTO THE LOW DOUBLE-DIGITS...

...SO I LOCK AND LOAD A FRESH CLIP AND SCAN FOR NEW TARGETS.



BIG MAMA ?!

"BIG MAMA" ?!?

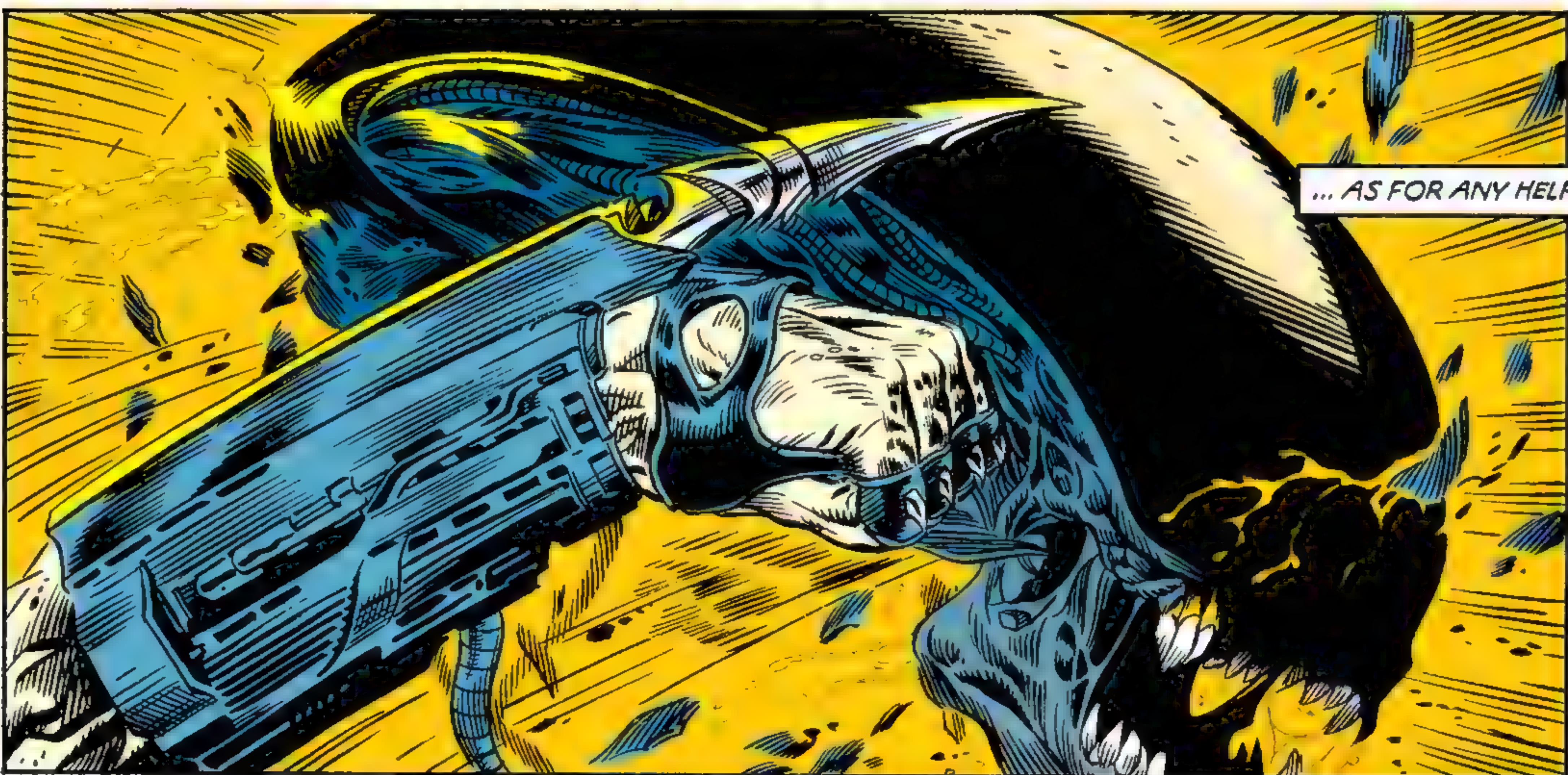




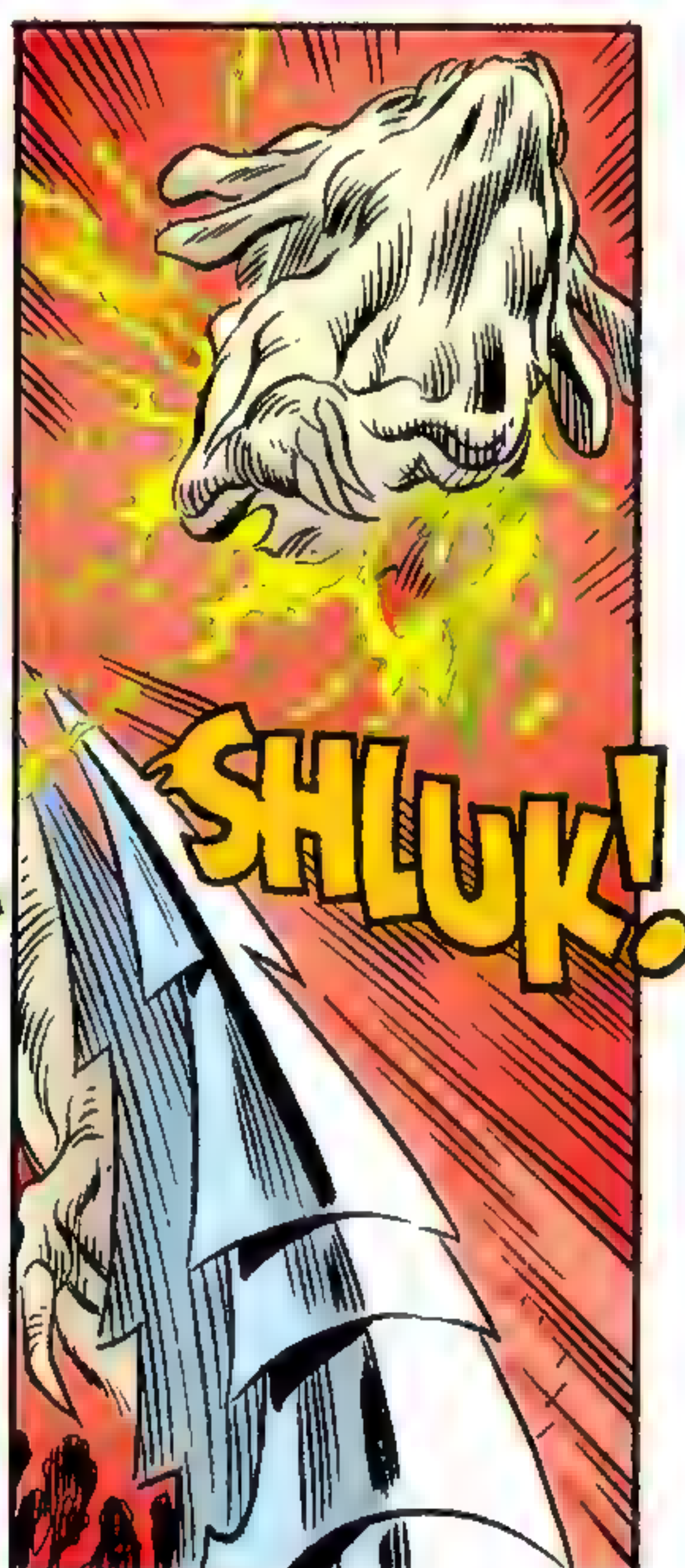
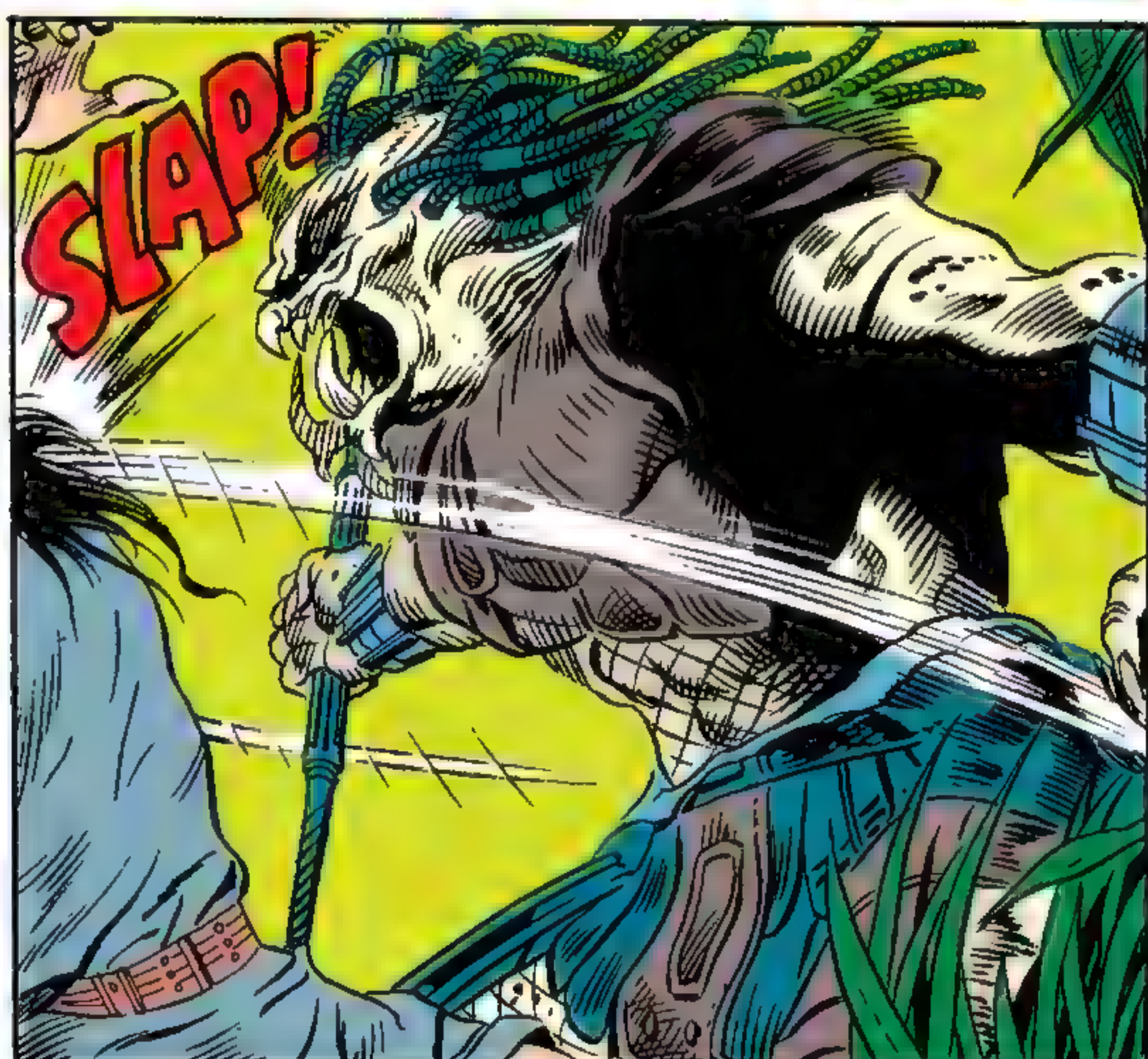
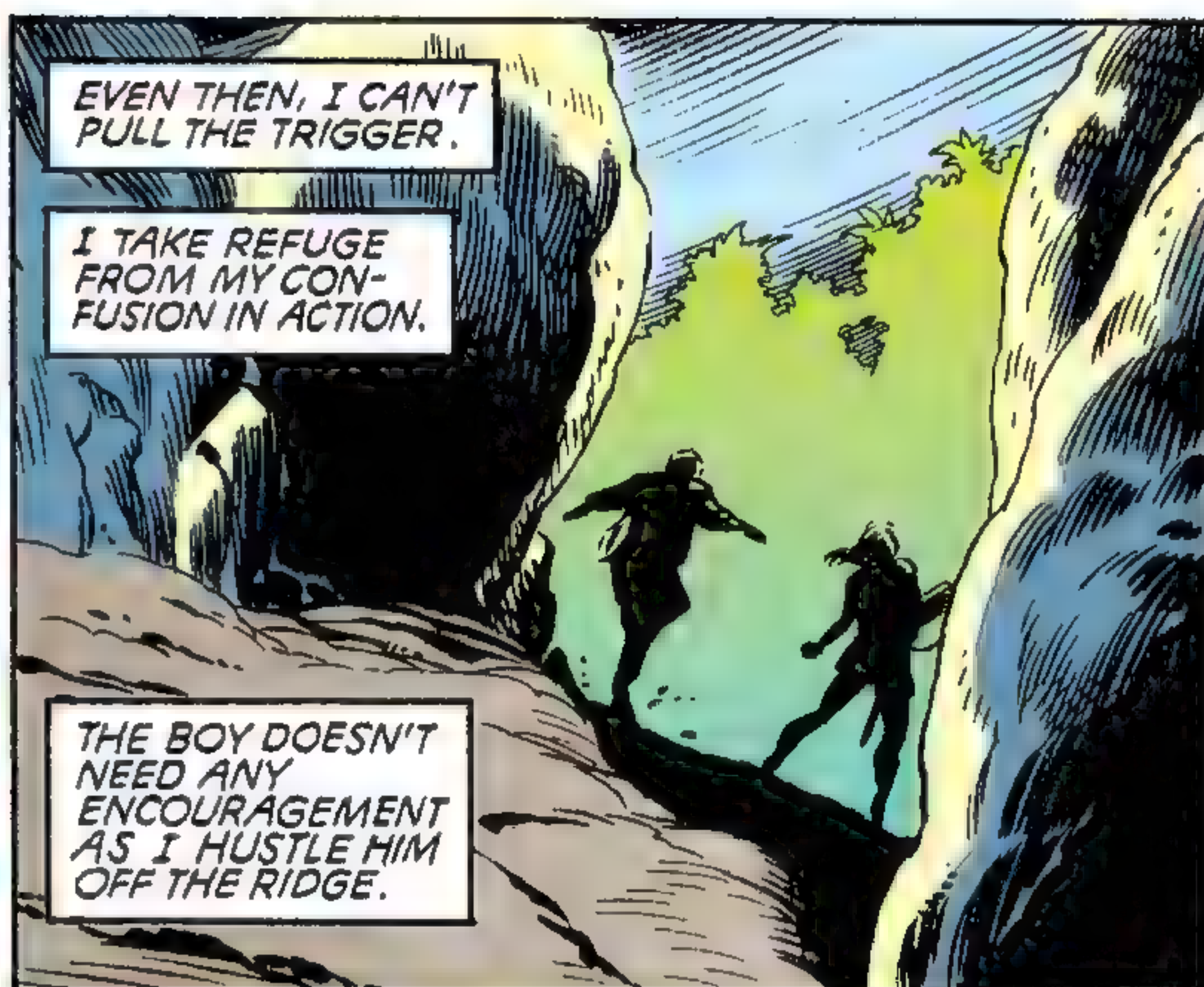
THERE'S CONCERN
IN MY VOICE,
ALMOST AS FOR
A TRUSTED
FRIEND.



THERE'S AS
LITTLE NEED
FOR IT...

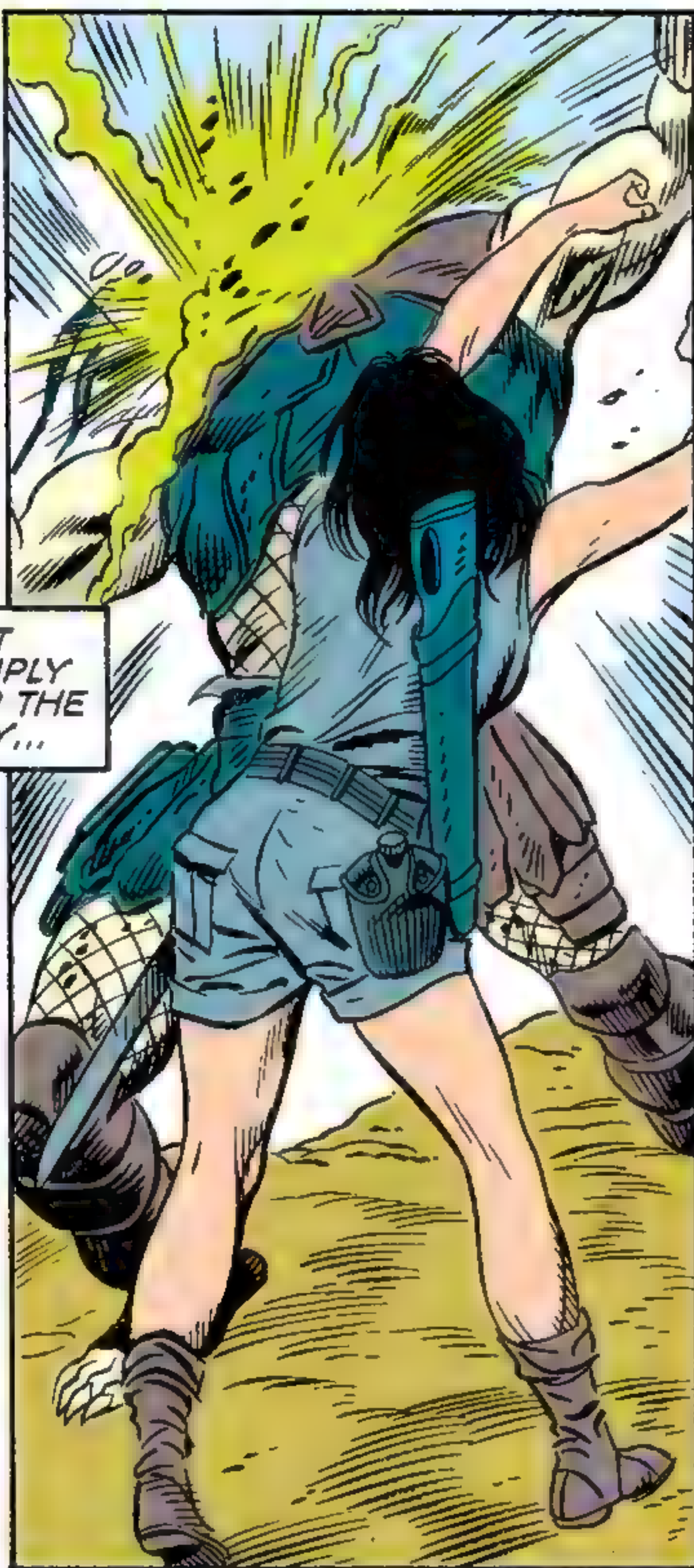


... AS FOR ANY HELP.





NOW IT'S MY
TURN TO GO
BERSERK.



NOT
SIMPLY
FOR THE
BOY...



... BUT FOR SHARI AND
MITCHELL AND THOSE
SOLDIERS WHOSE GEAR
AND CLOTHES I WEAR.

AND ALL THE
OTHER SOULS
THIS BUTCHER'S
CLAIMED AS
TROPHIES. REAL
OR IMAGINED.



AND POSSIBLY EVEN, AT
THE LAST, FOR MYSELF.

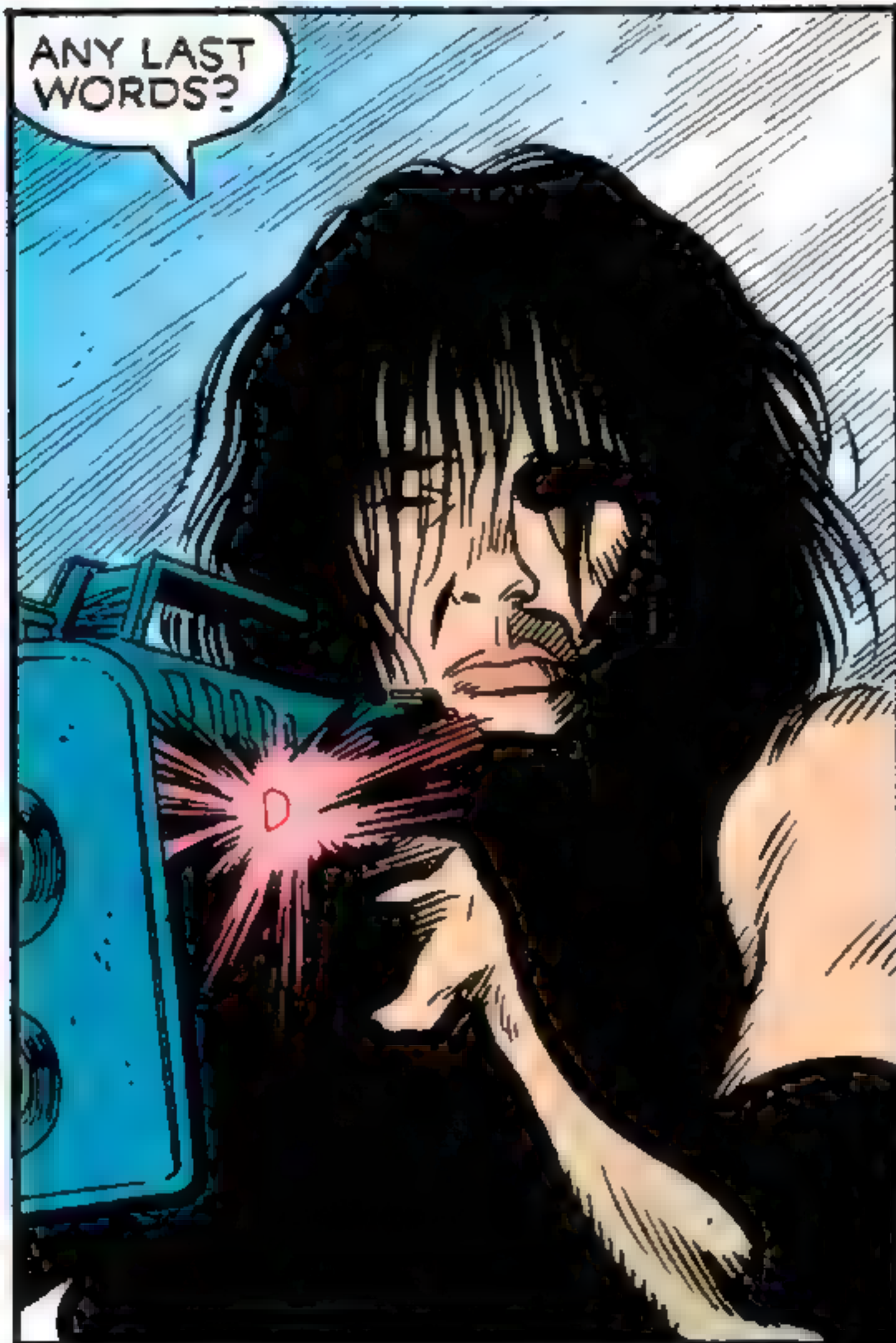
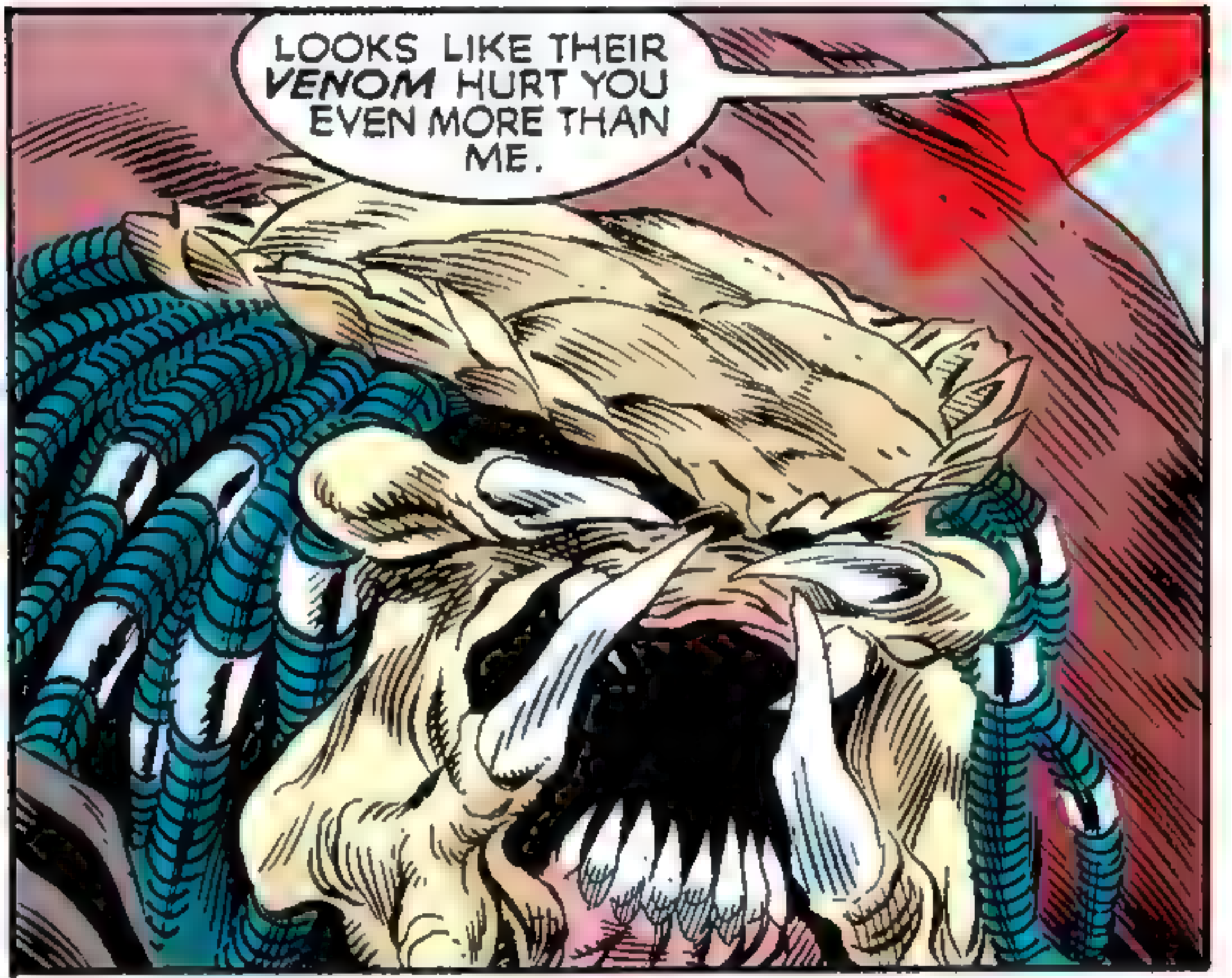
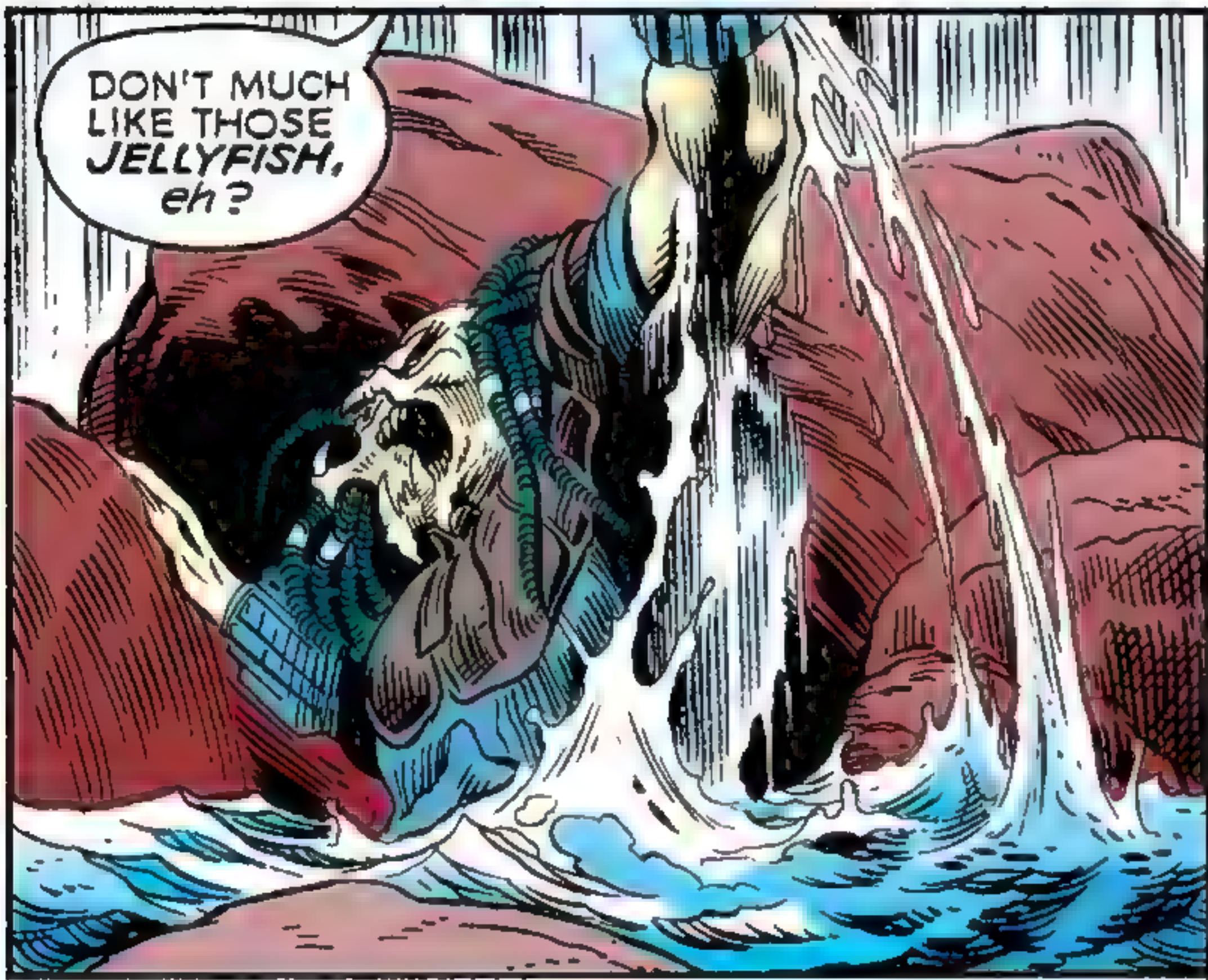
BECAUSE I'M A
TROPHY, TOO.



YARRGH!



SPLASH!



VIRTUALLY REAL

WHAT THE
HELL
?!?

A COLONIAL
ORBITAL
ASSAULT
VEHICLE!

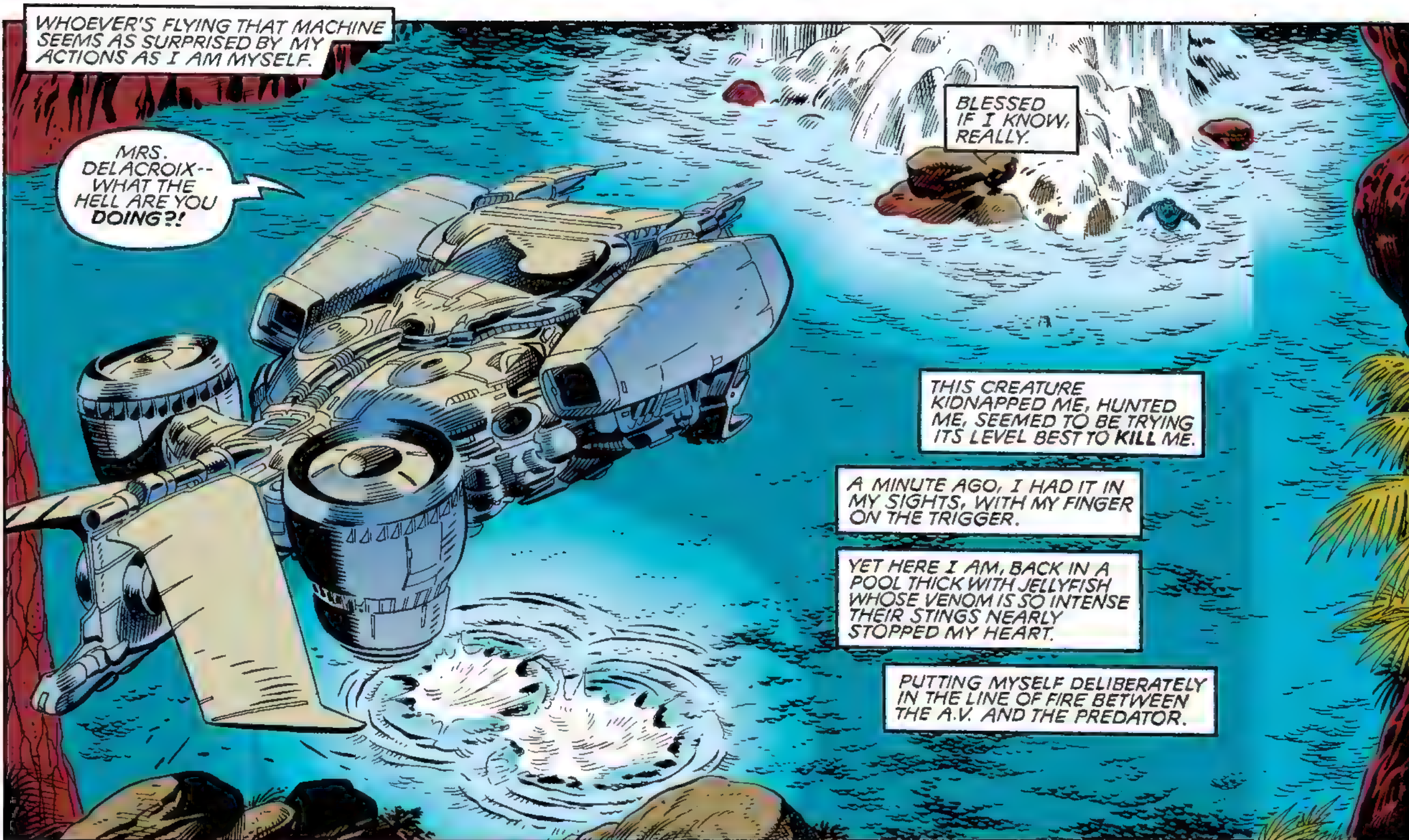
THEY'RE
SHOOTING
AT MY
PREDATOR!

No!

BEFORE I KNOW WHAT
I'M DOING, I LEAP
OFF THE BLUFF...

...INTO
WATER I
KNOW IS
DEADLY
TO ME...

...TO SAVE
THE LIFE OF
SOMEONE I
INSTINCTIVELY--
IMPOSSIBLY--
THINK OF AS
A FRIEND.



WHOEVER'S FLYING THAT MACHINE SEEMS AS SURPRISED BY MY ACTIONS AS I AM MYSELF.

MRS. DELACROIX-- WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!

BLESSED IF I KNOW, REALLY.

THIS CREATURE KIDNAPPED ME, HUNTED ME, SEEMED TO BE TRYING ITS LEVEL BEST TO KILL ME.

A MINUTE AGO, I HAD IT IN MY SIGHTS, WITH MY FINGER ON THE TRIGGER.

YET HERE I AM, BACK IN A POOL THICK WITH JELLYFISH WHOSE VENOM IS SO INTENSE THEIR STINGS NEARLY STOPPED MY HEART.

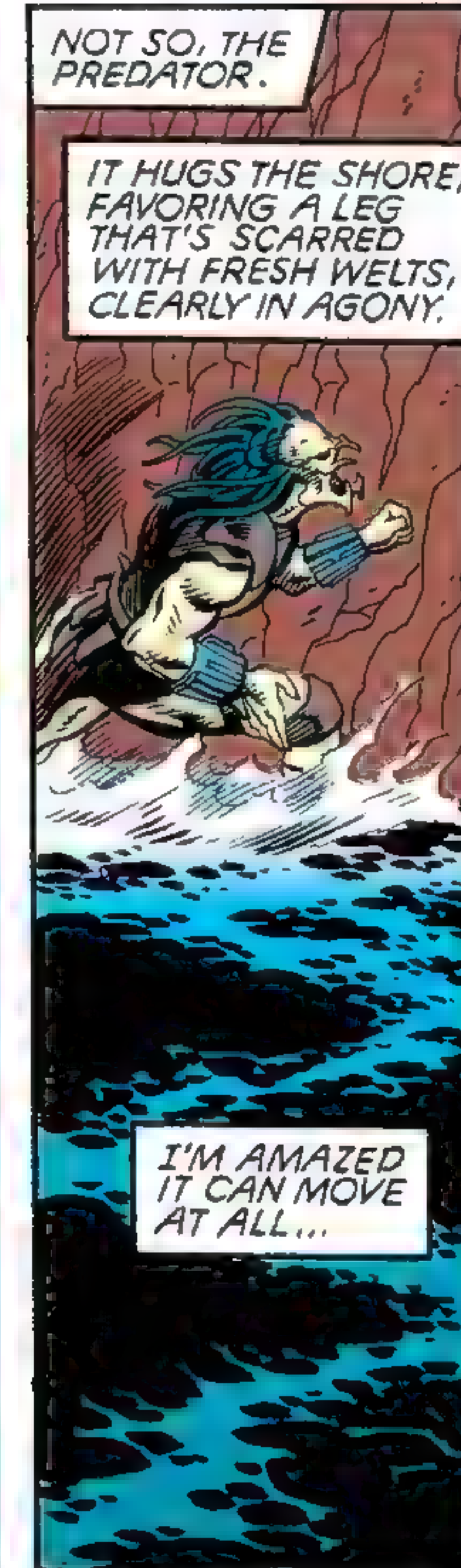
PUTTING MYSELF DELIBERATELY IN THE LINE OF FIRE BETWEEN THE A.V. AND THE PREDATOR.



I MUST BE MAD.

I CERTAINLY MUST BE BLESSED.

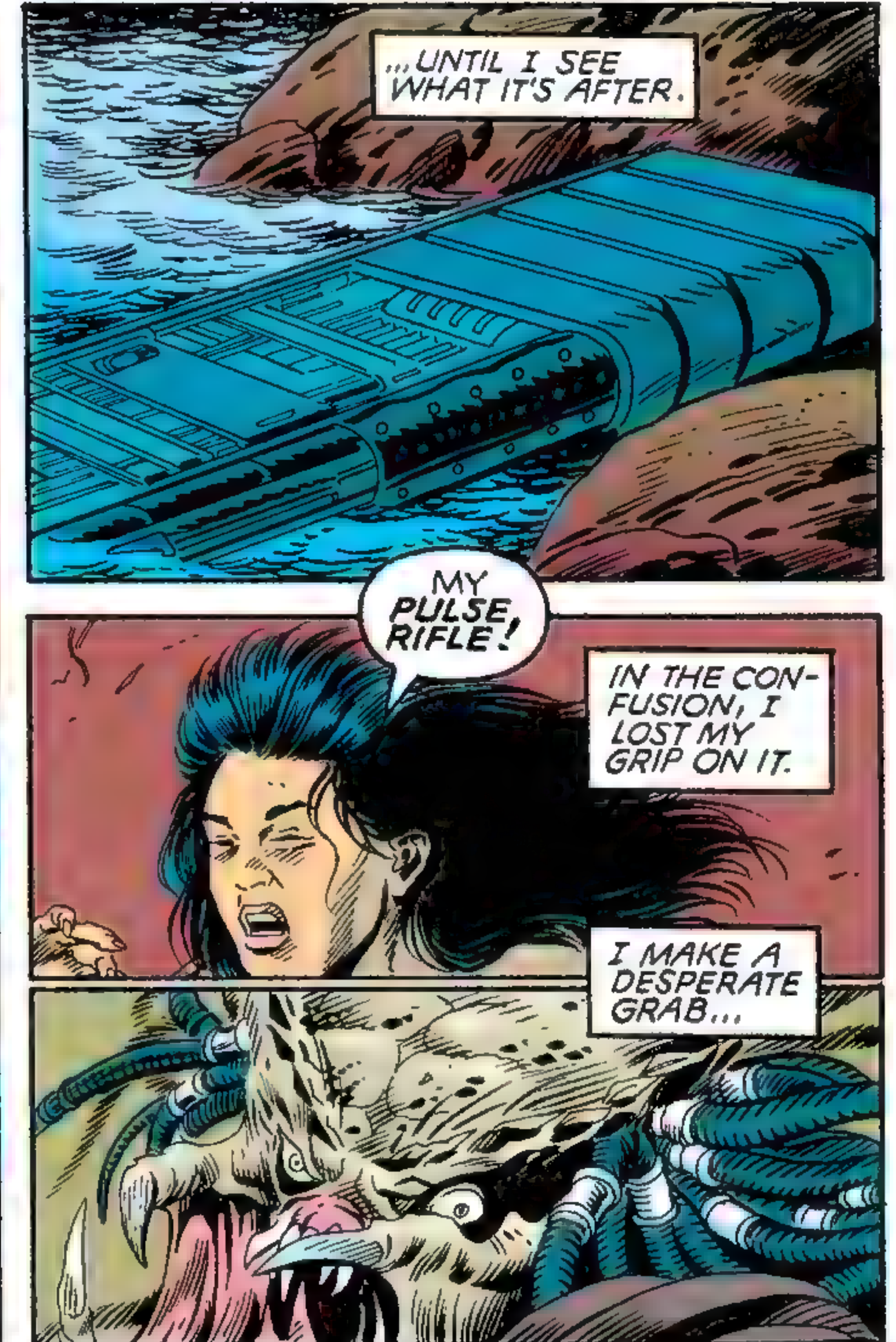
THIS TIME, THE STINGS DON'T HURT. I BARELY FEEL THEIR TOUCH.



NOT SO, THE PREDATOR.

IT HUGS THE SHORE, FAVORING A LEG THAT'S SCARRED WITH FRESH WELTS, CLEARLY IN AGONY.

I'M AMAZED IT CAN MOVE AT ALL...



...UNTIL I SEE WHAT IT'S AFTER.

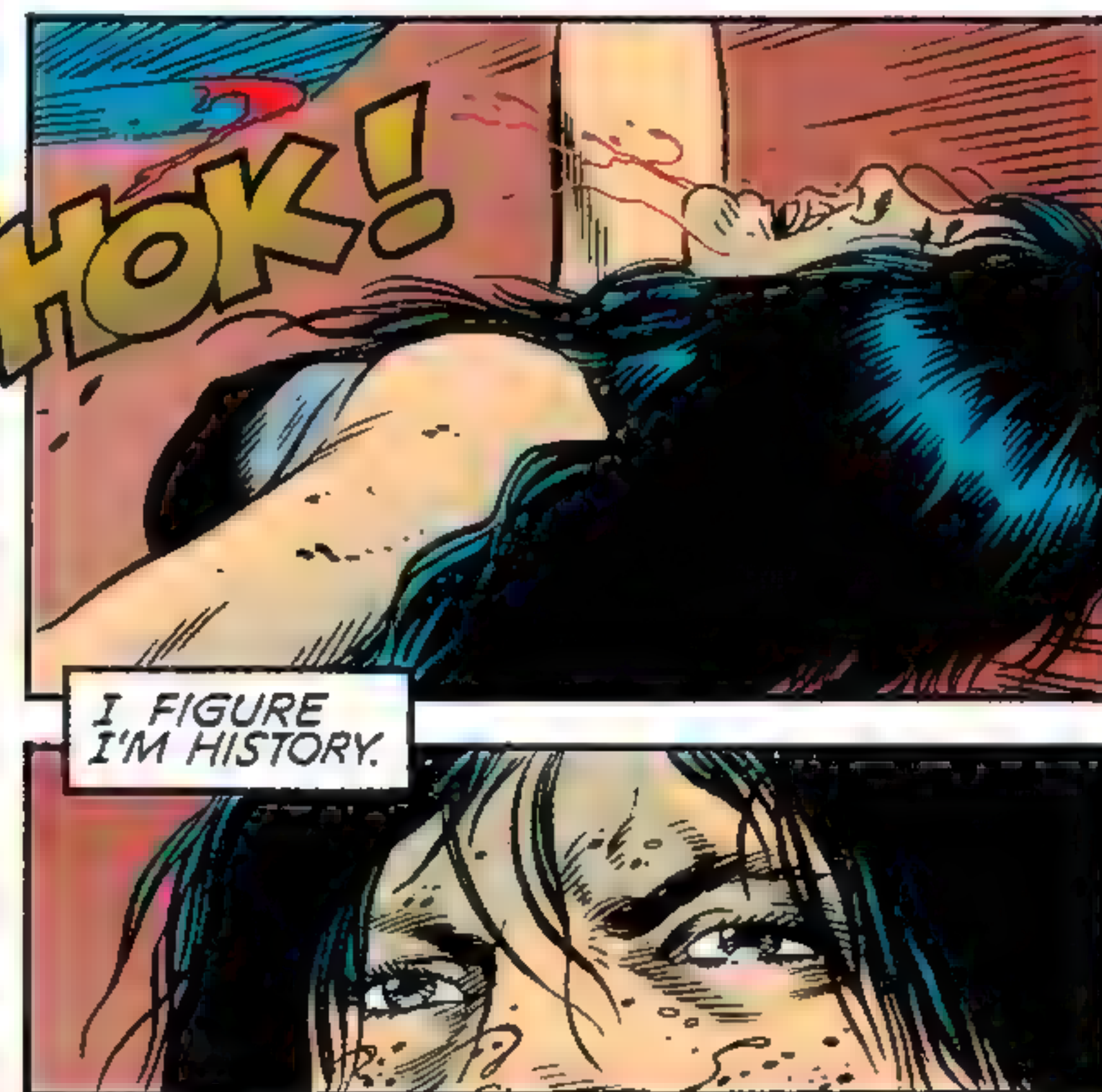
MY PULSE, RIFLE!

IN THE CONFUSION, I LOST MY GRIP ON IT.

I MAKE A DESPERATE GRAB...



... BUT NOT QUITE DESPERATE ENOUGH.

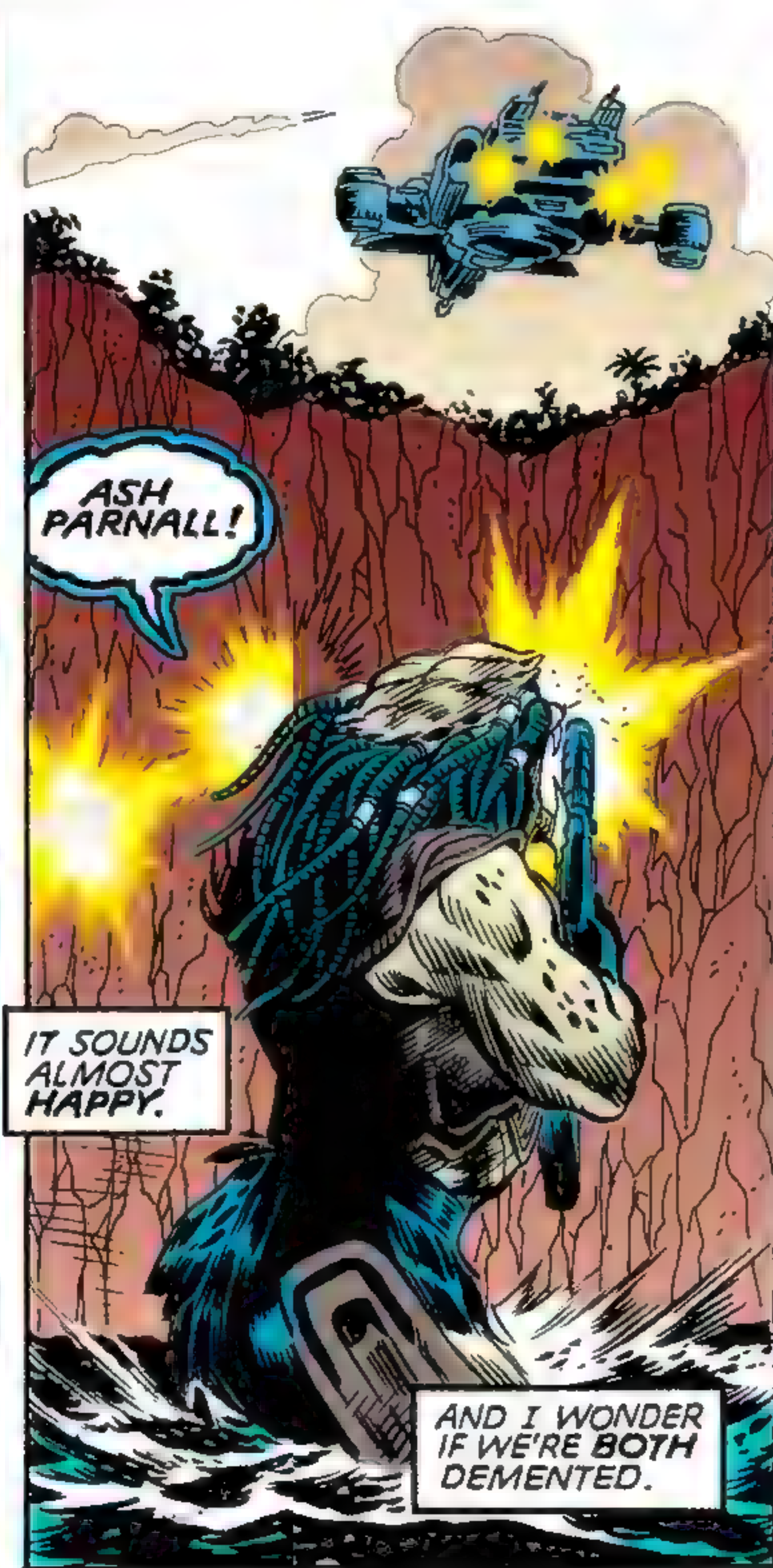


SHOK!

I FIGURE I'M HISTORY.



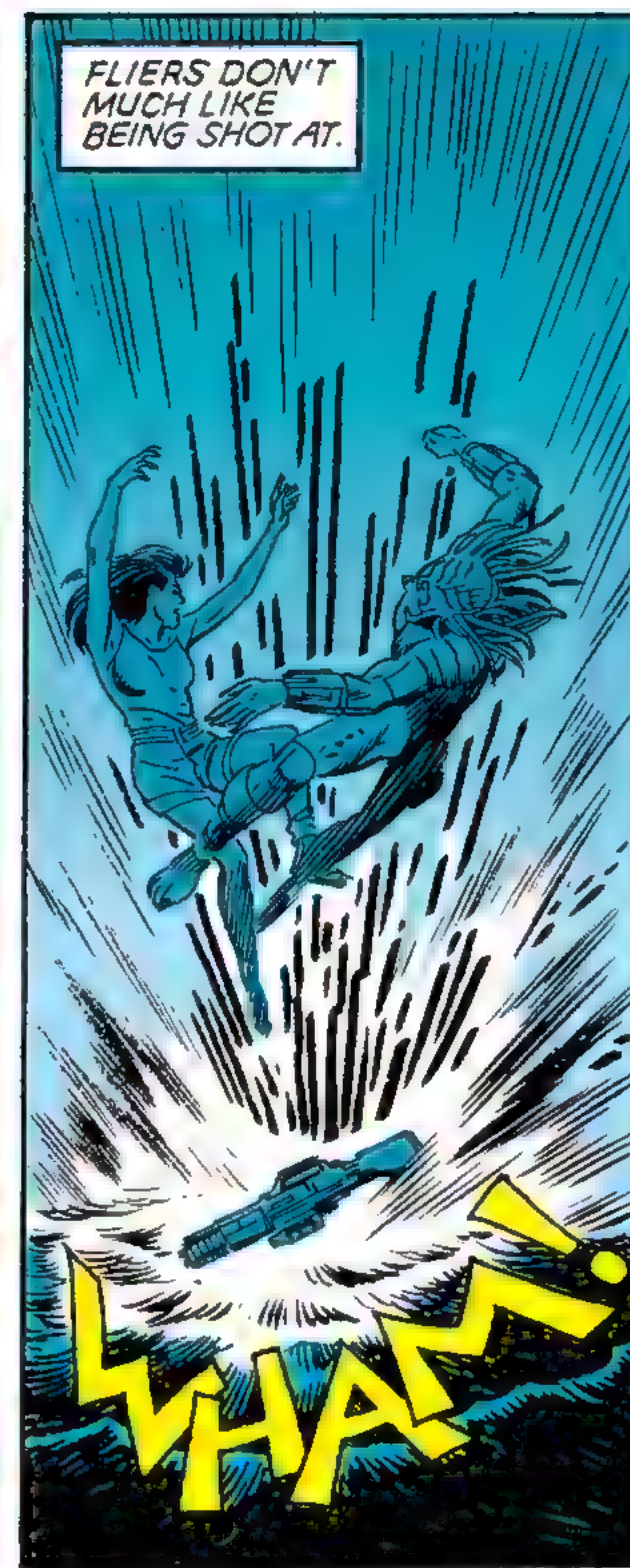
ASH... PARNALL?



ASH PARNALL!

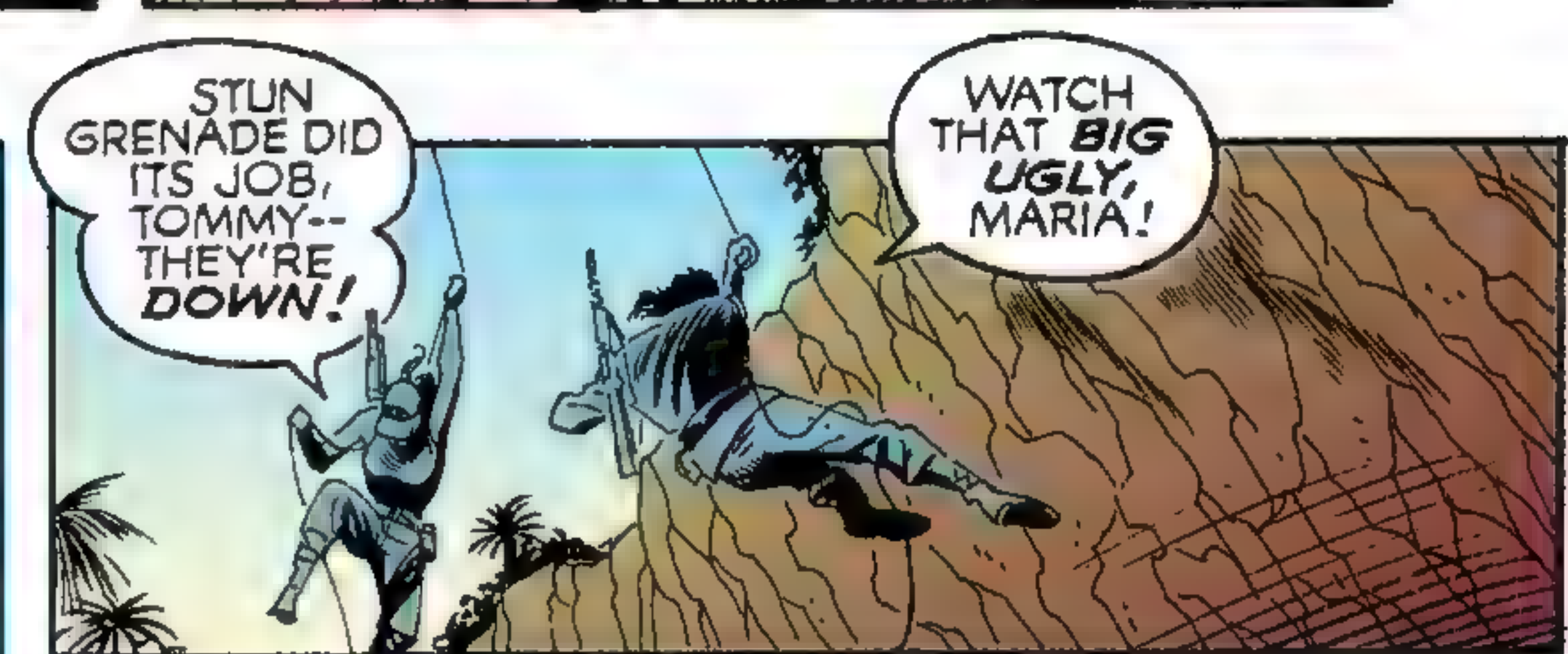
IT SOUNDS ALMOST HAPPY.

AND I WONDER IF WE'RE BOTH DEMENTED.



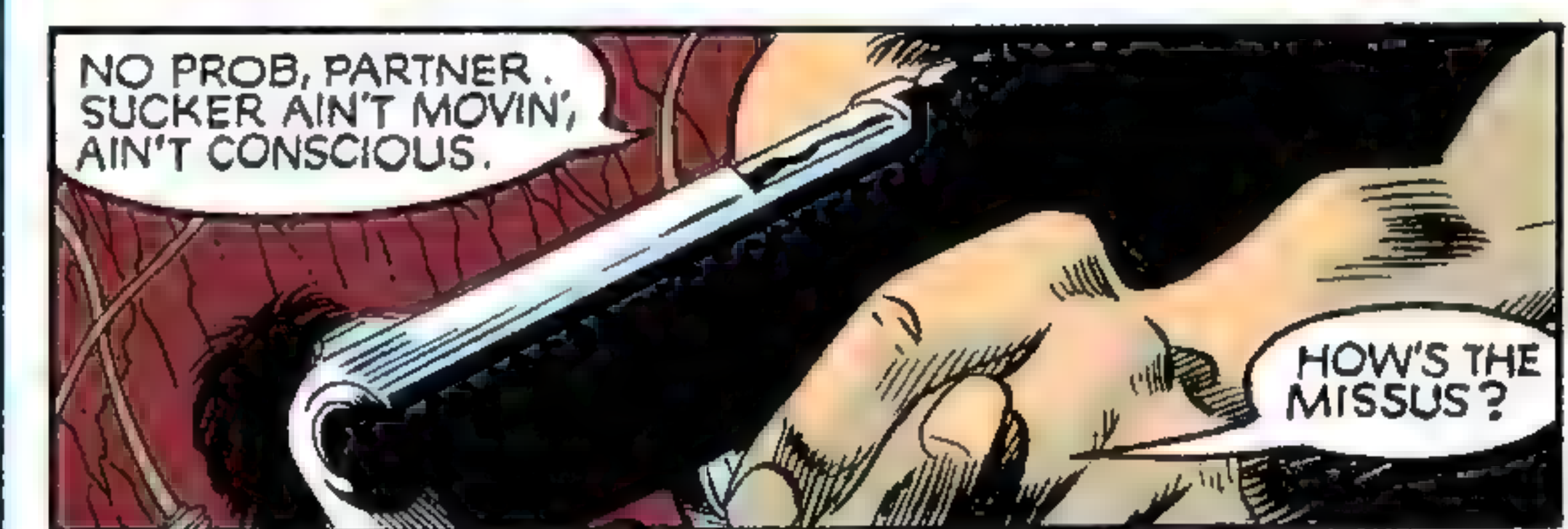
FLIERS DON'T MUCH LIKE BEING SHOT AT.

WHAM!



STUN GRENADE DID ITS JOB, TOMMY-- THEY'RE DOWN!

WATCH THAT BIG UGLY, MARIA!



NO PROB, PARTNER. SUCKER AIN'T MOVIN', AIN'T CONSCIOUS.

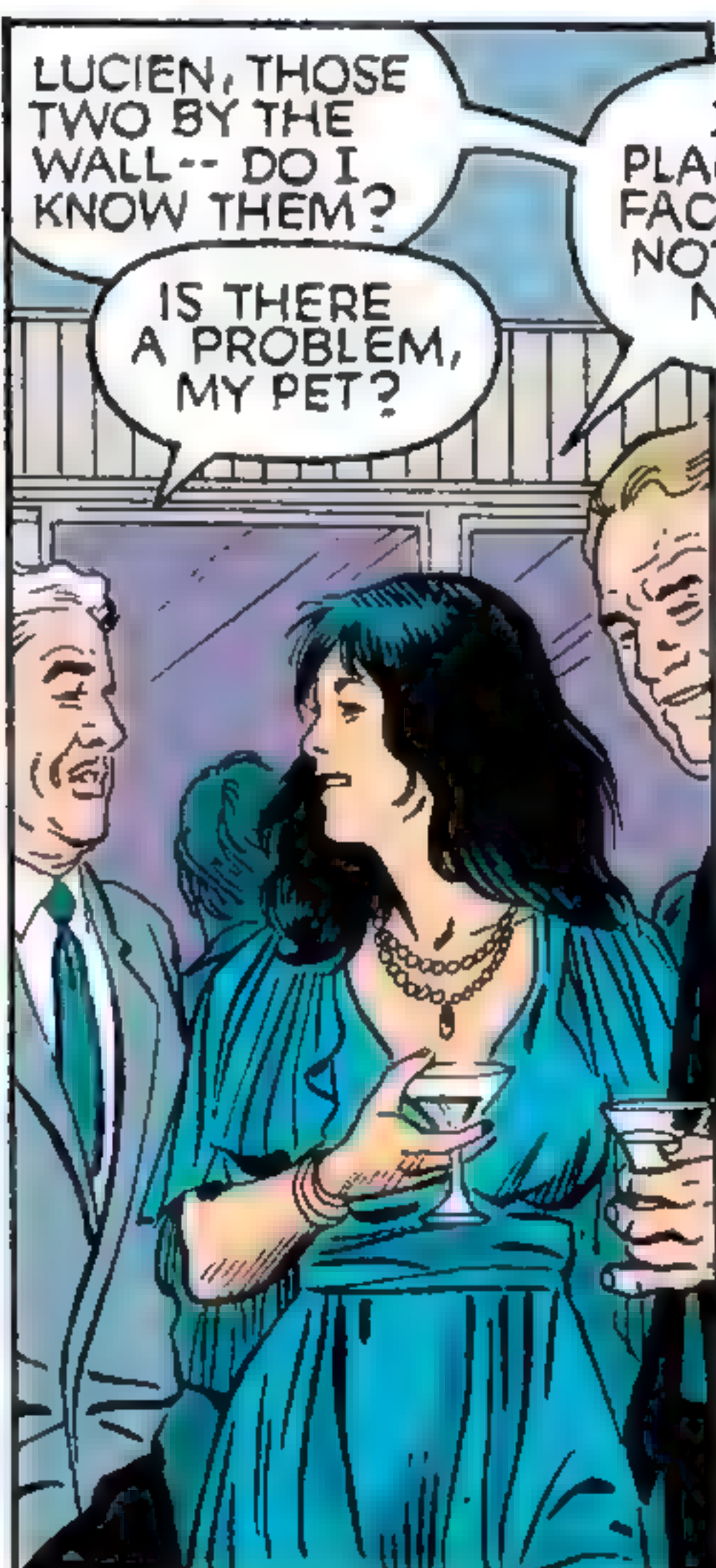
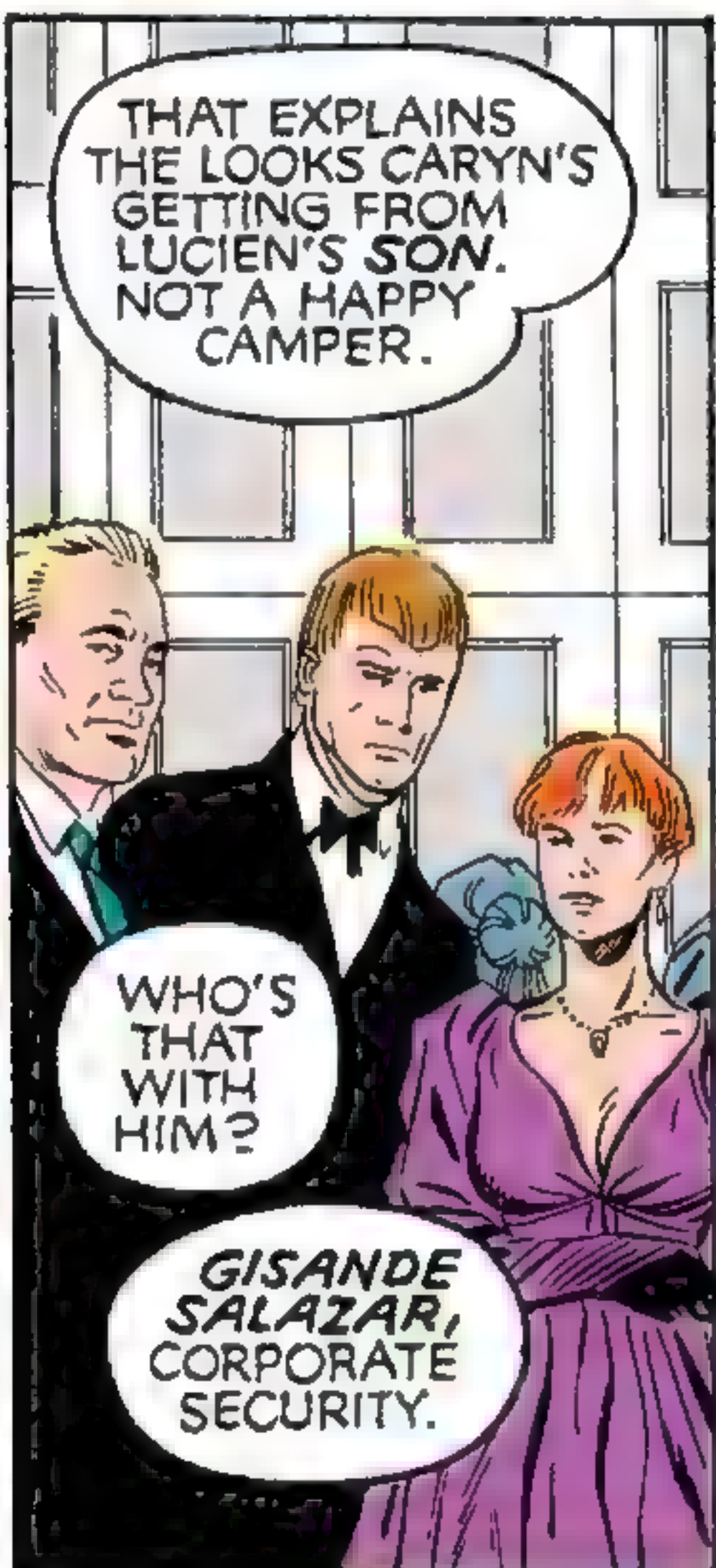
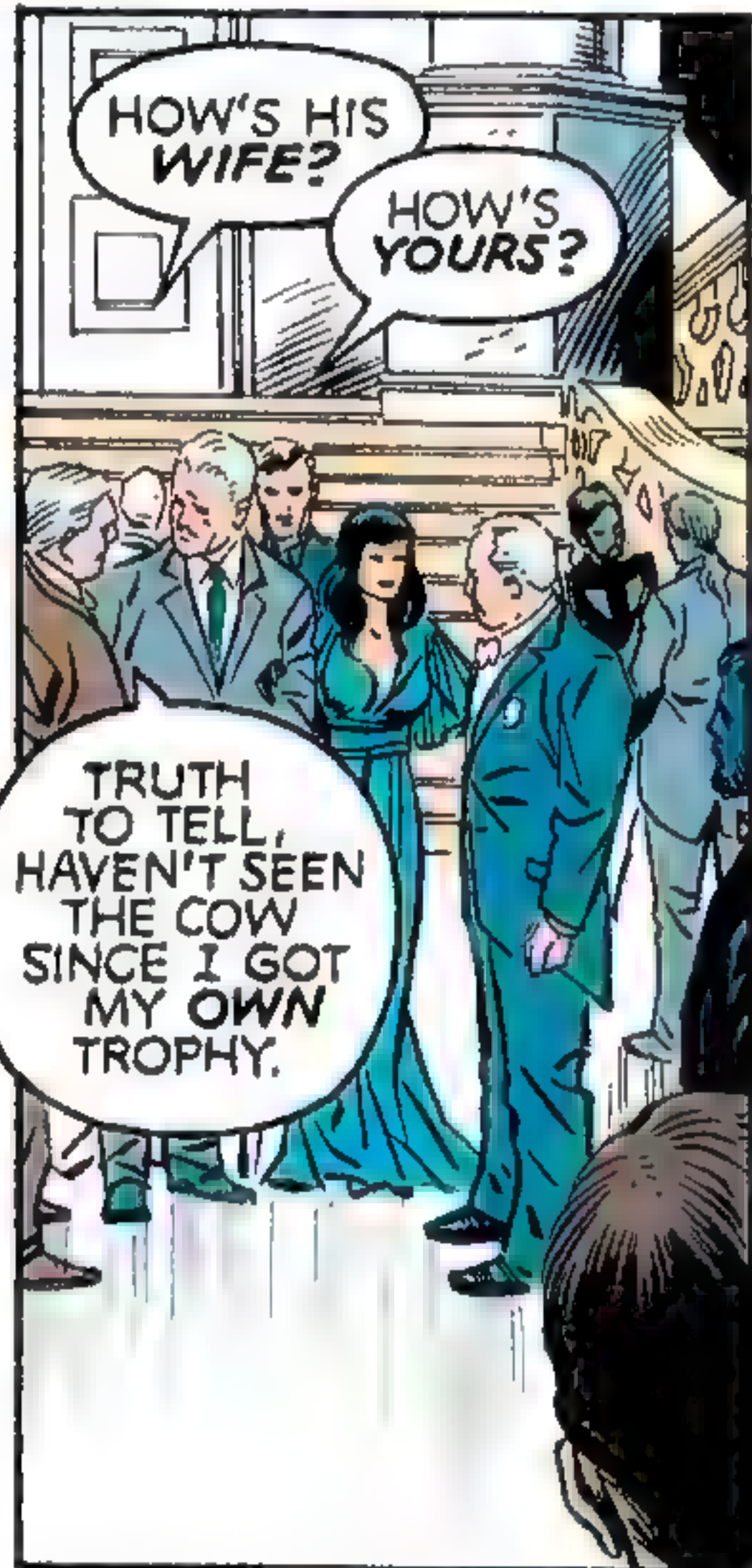
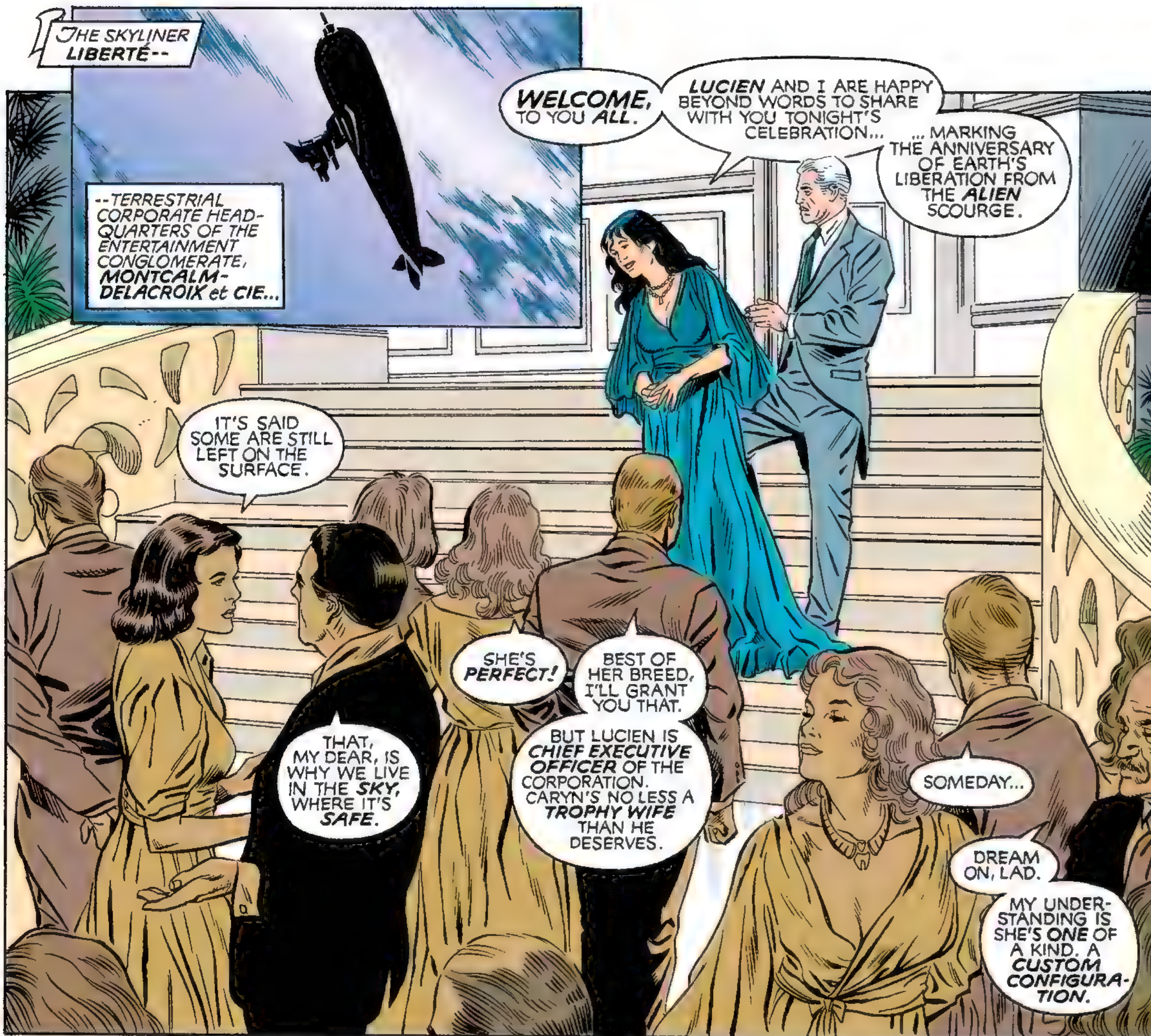
HOW'S THE MISSUS?

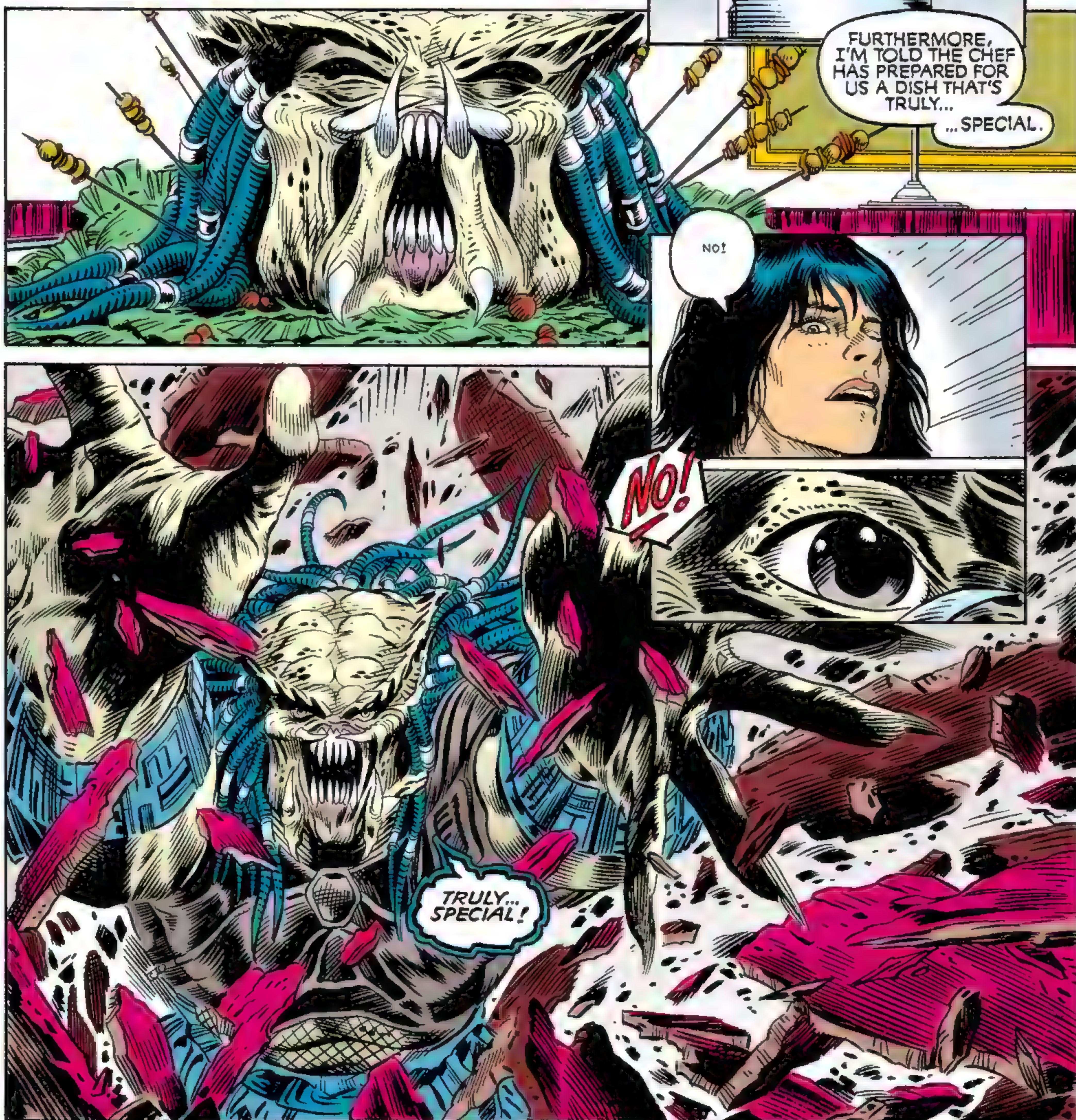
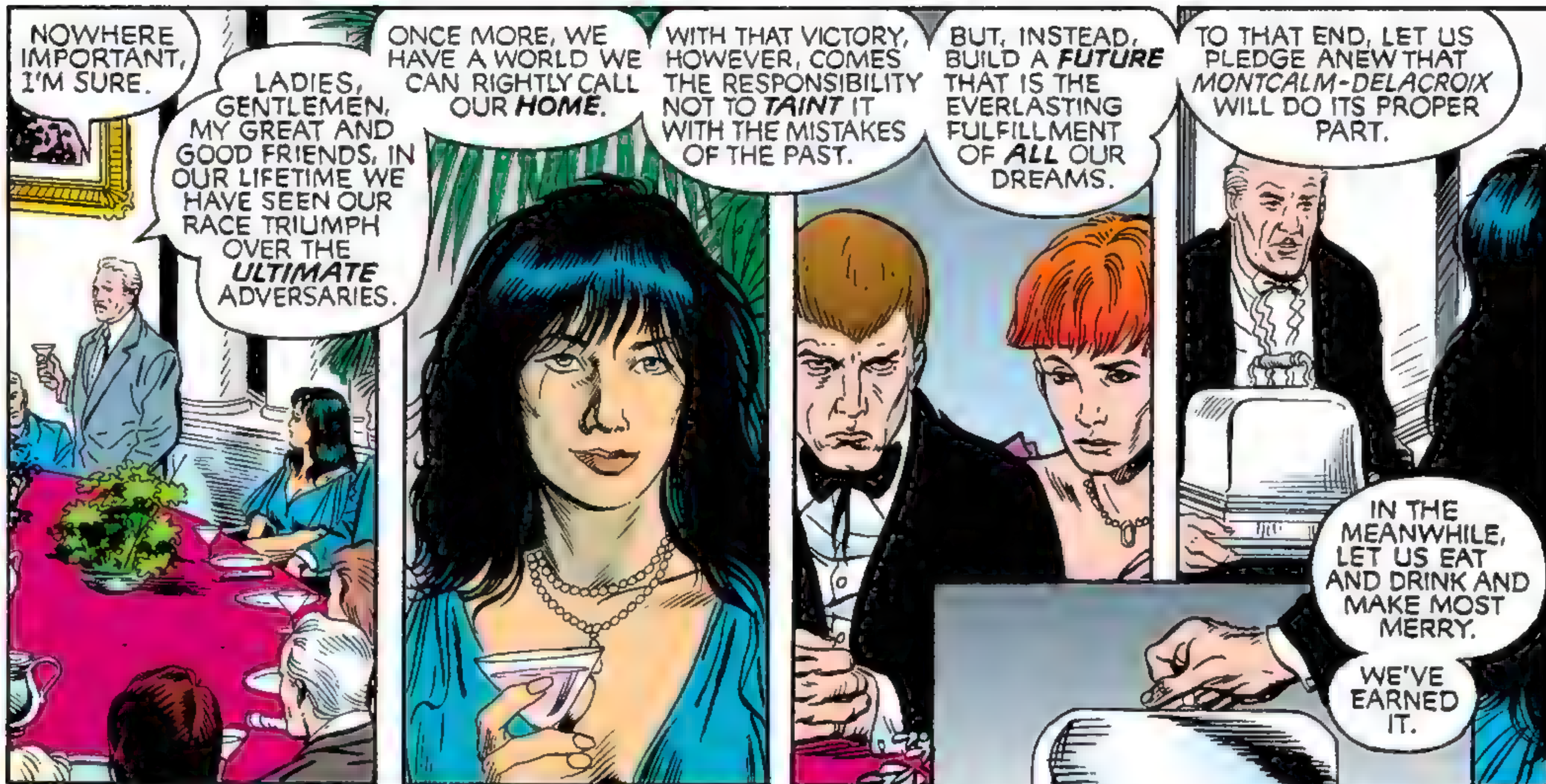


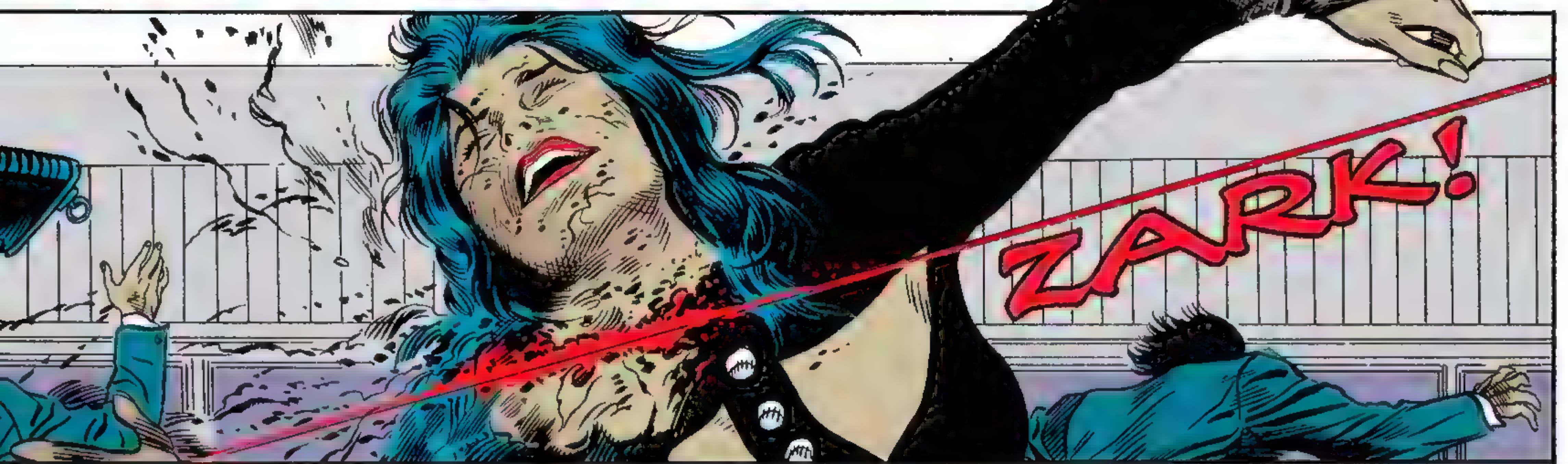
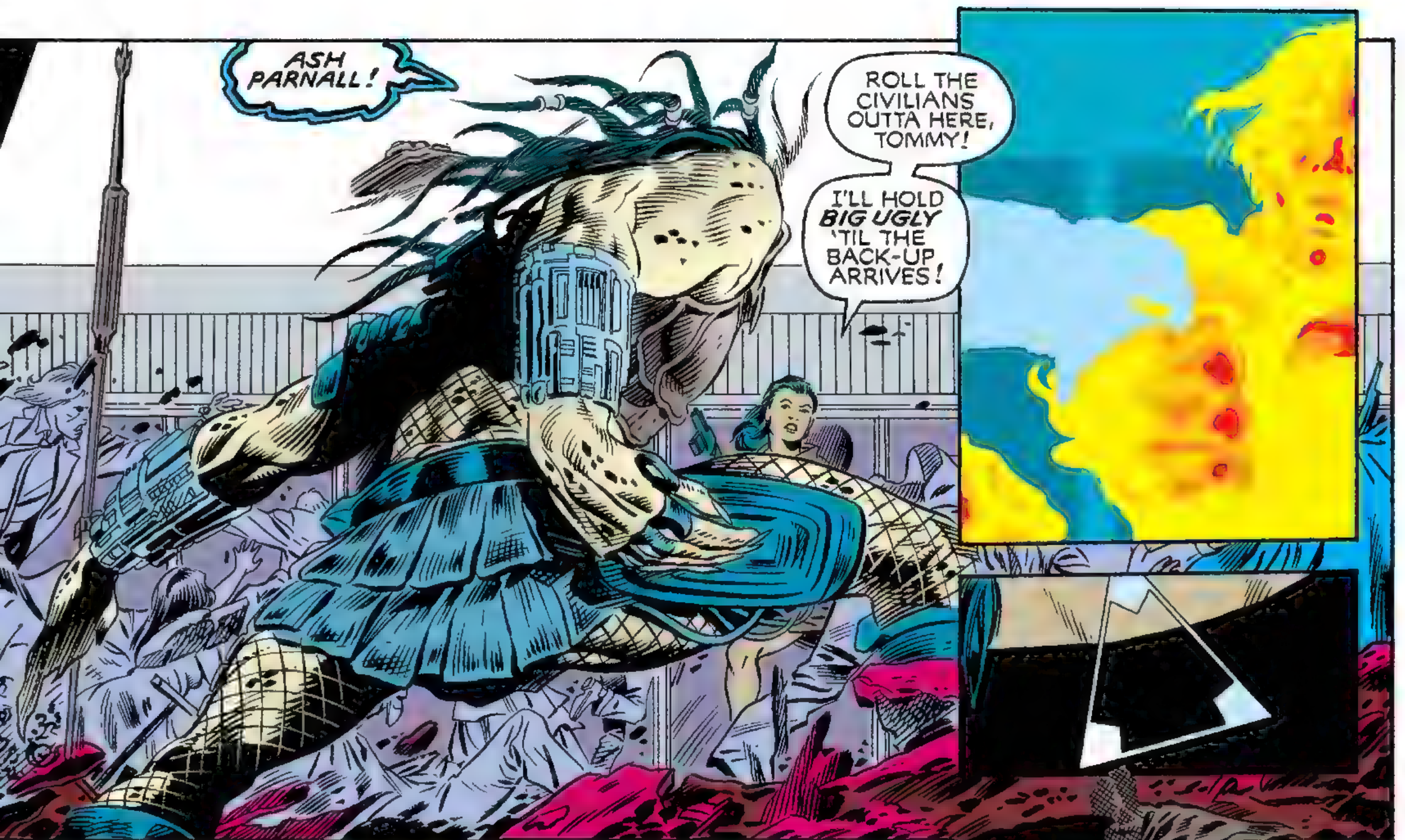
AWAKE BUT FADIN' FAST.

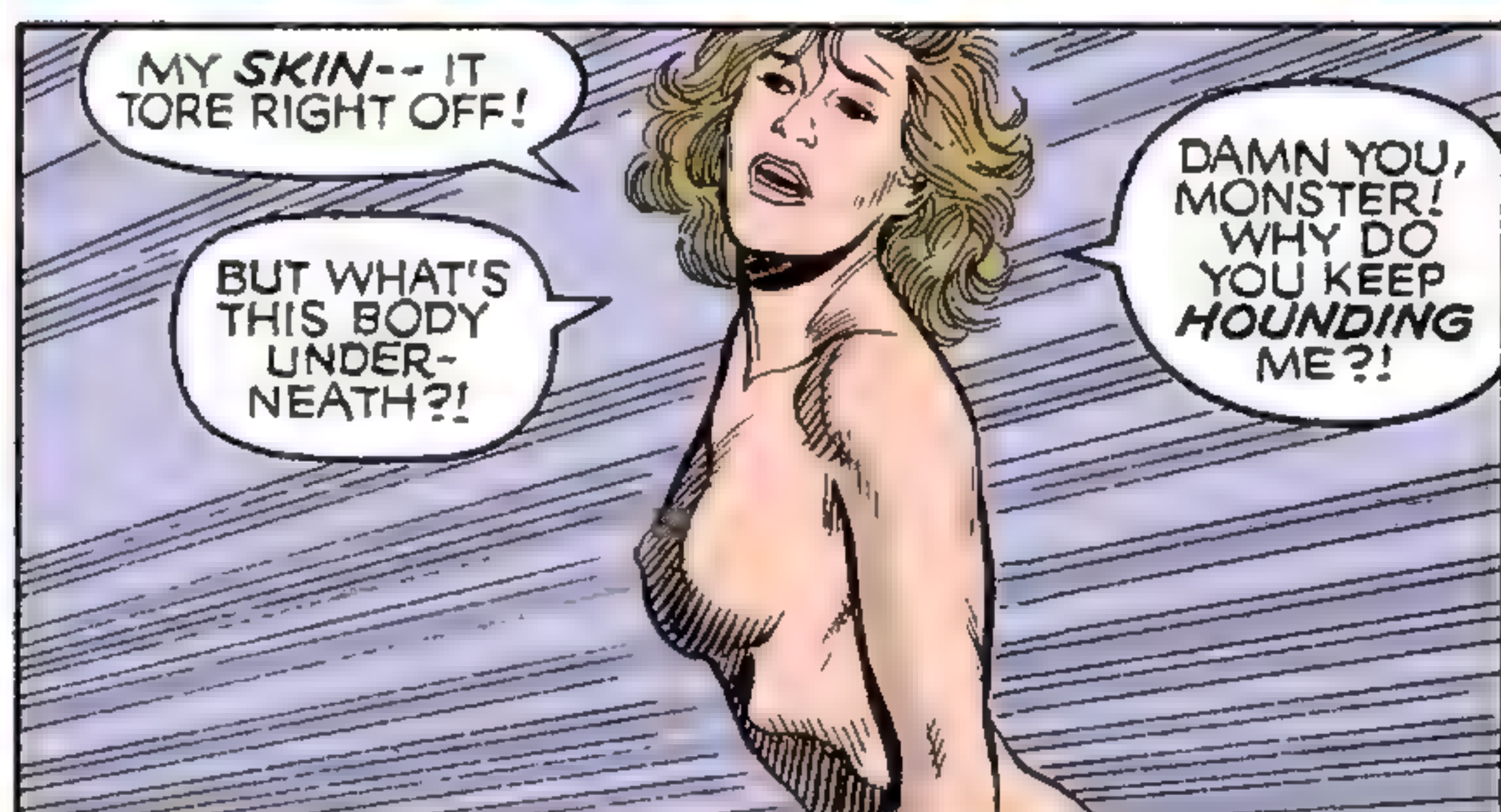
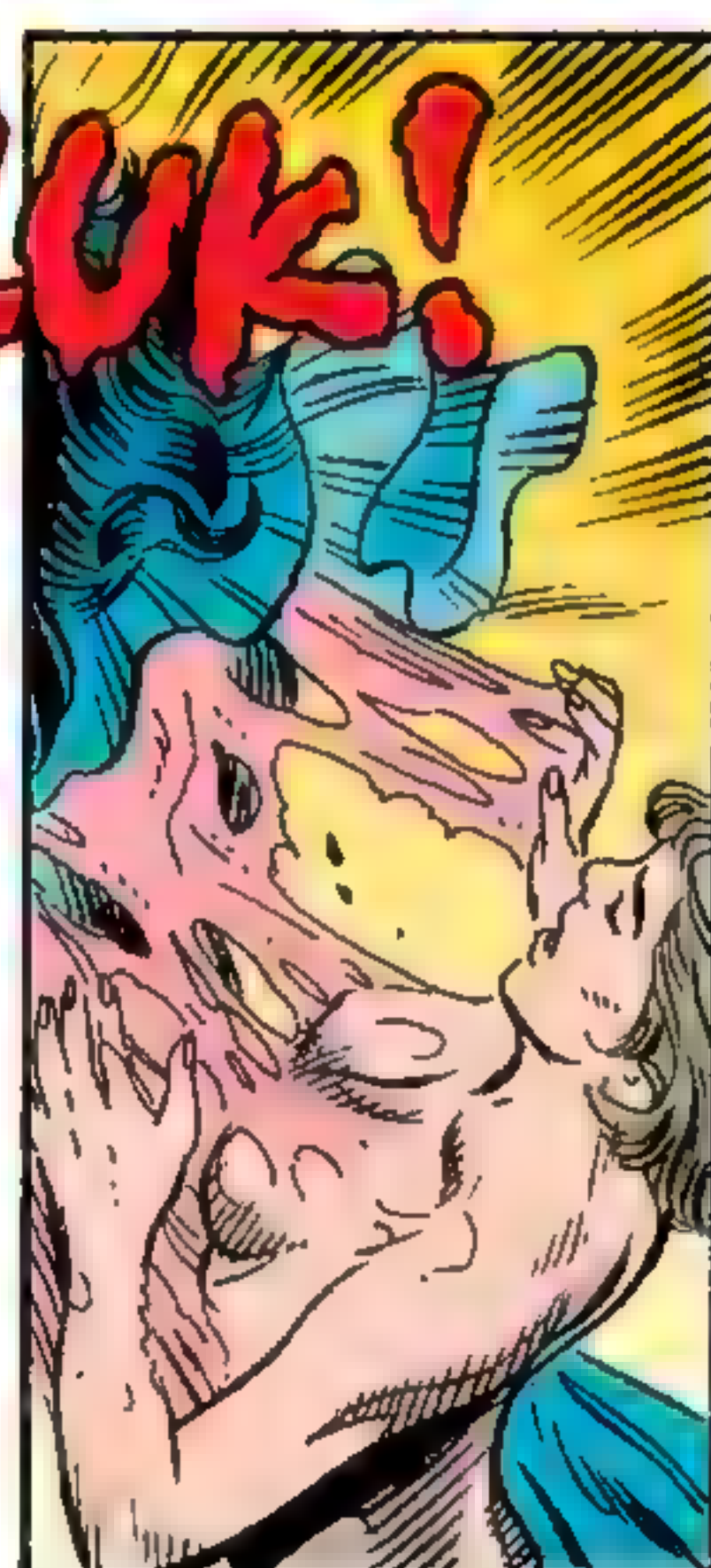
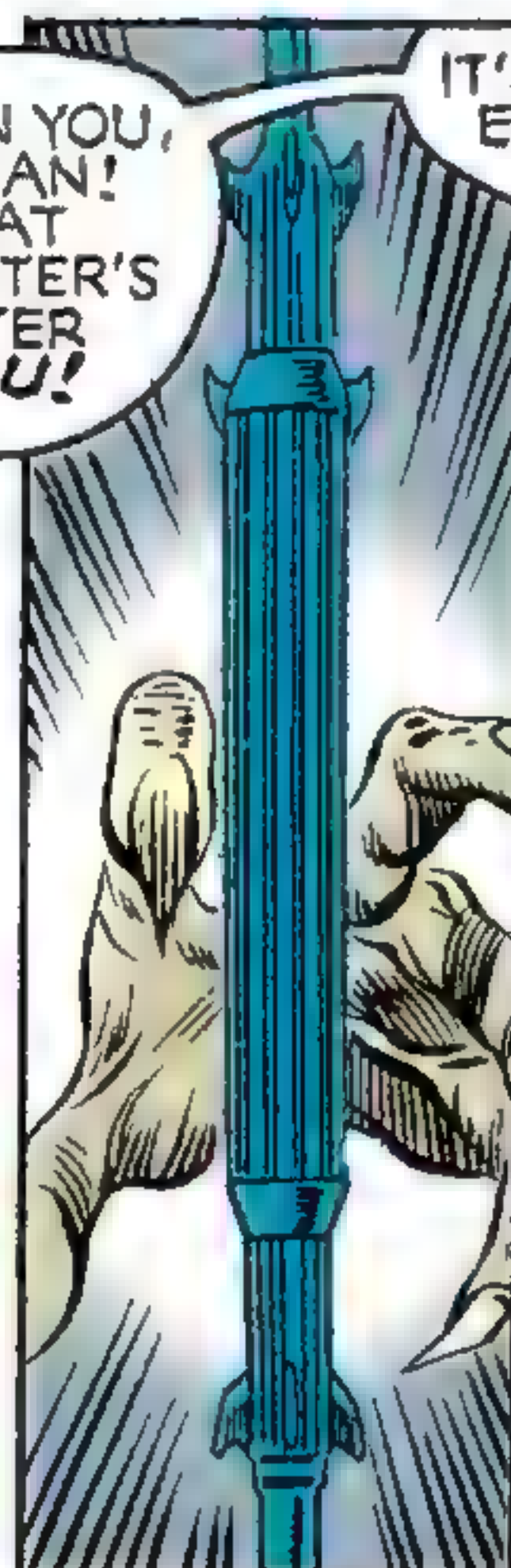
NOT TO WORRY, CARYN. EVERYTHING'S GONNA BE FINE.

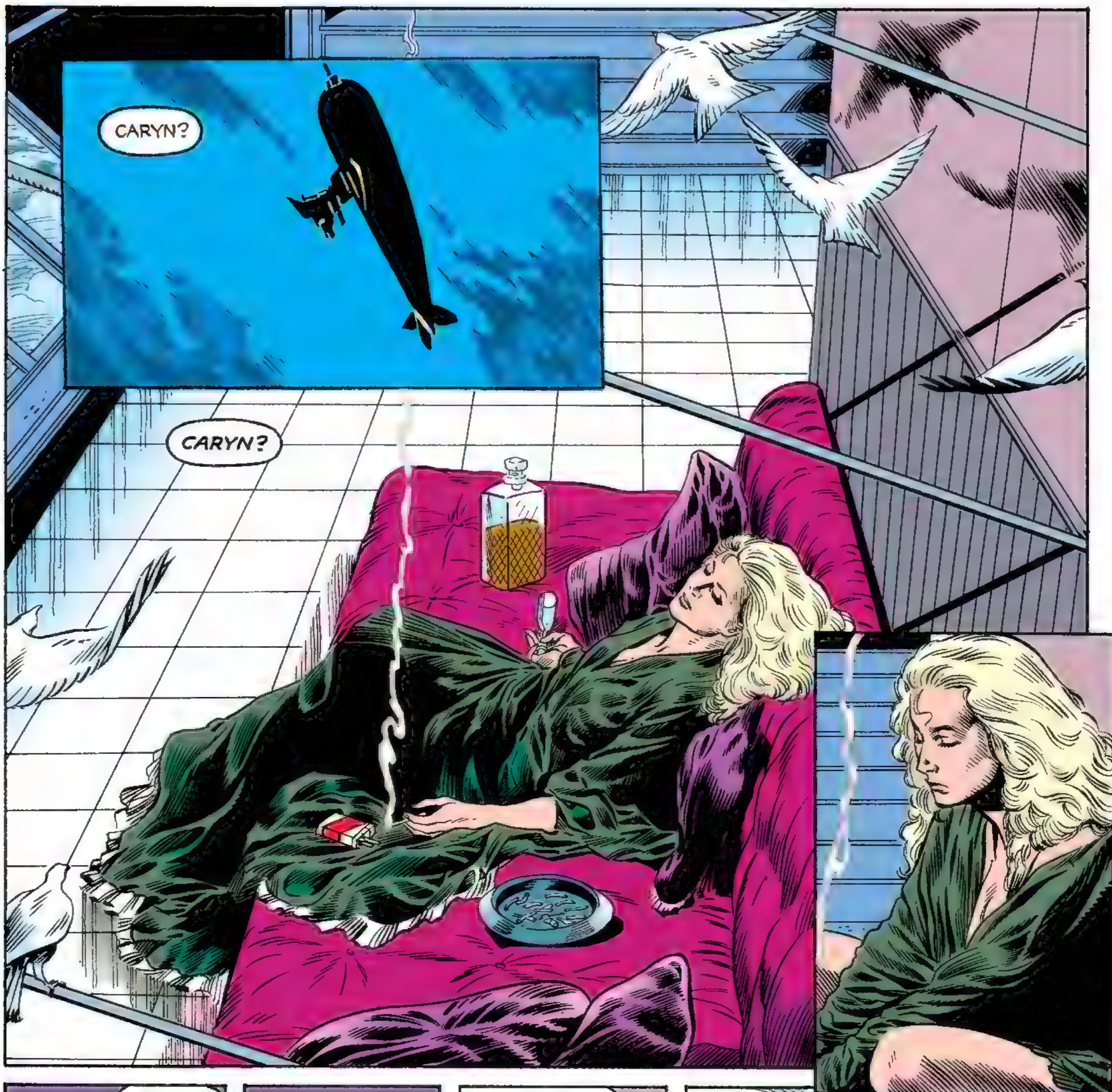
WE'RE HERE TO TAKE YOU HOME.





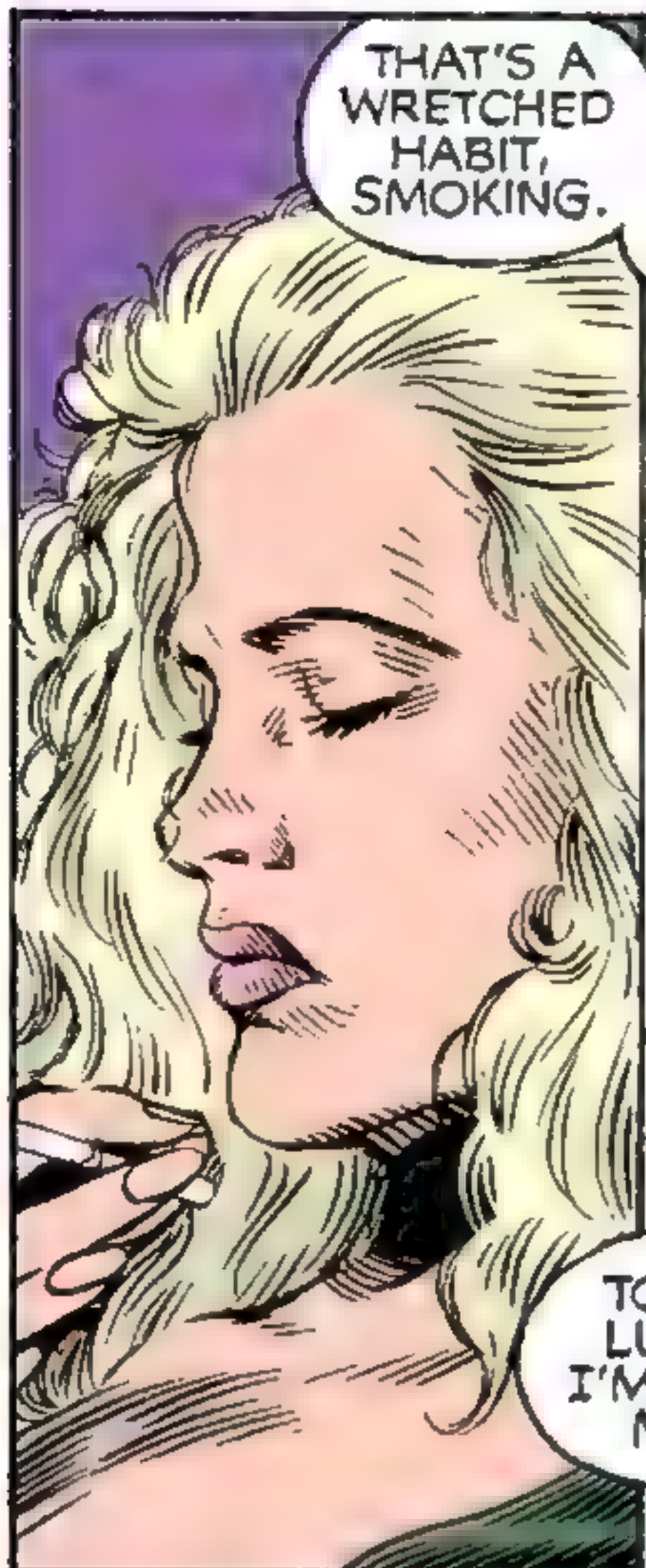






CARYN?

CARYN?



THAT'S A
WRETCHED
HABIT,
SMOKING.

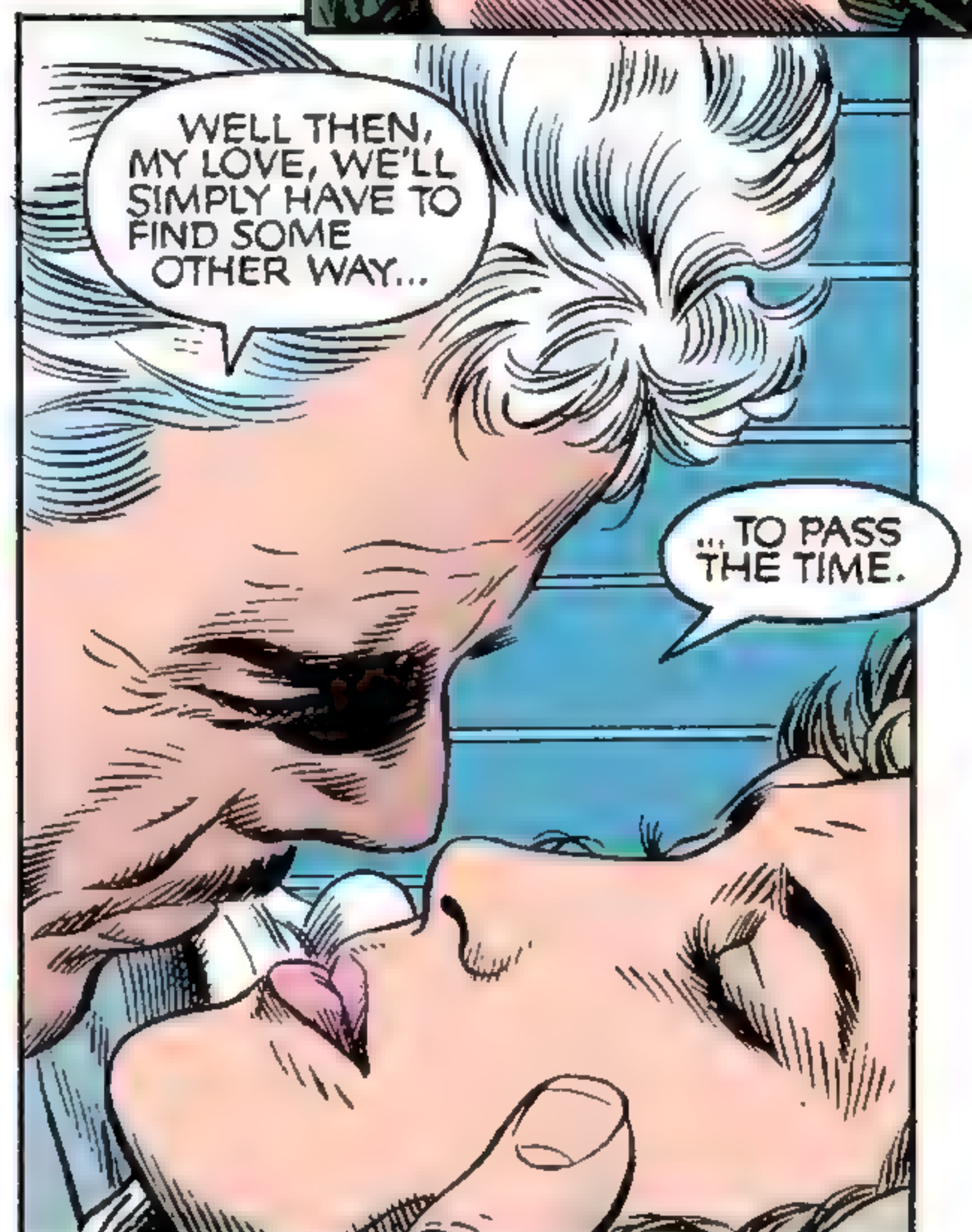
ESPECIALLY
TO EXCESS.

TONIGHT,
LUCIEN,
I'M IN THE
MOOD.



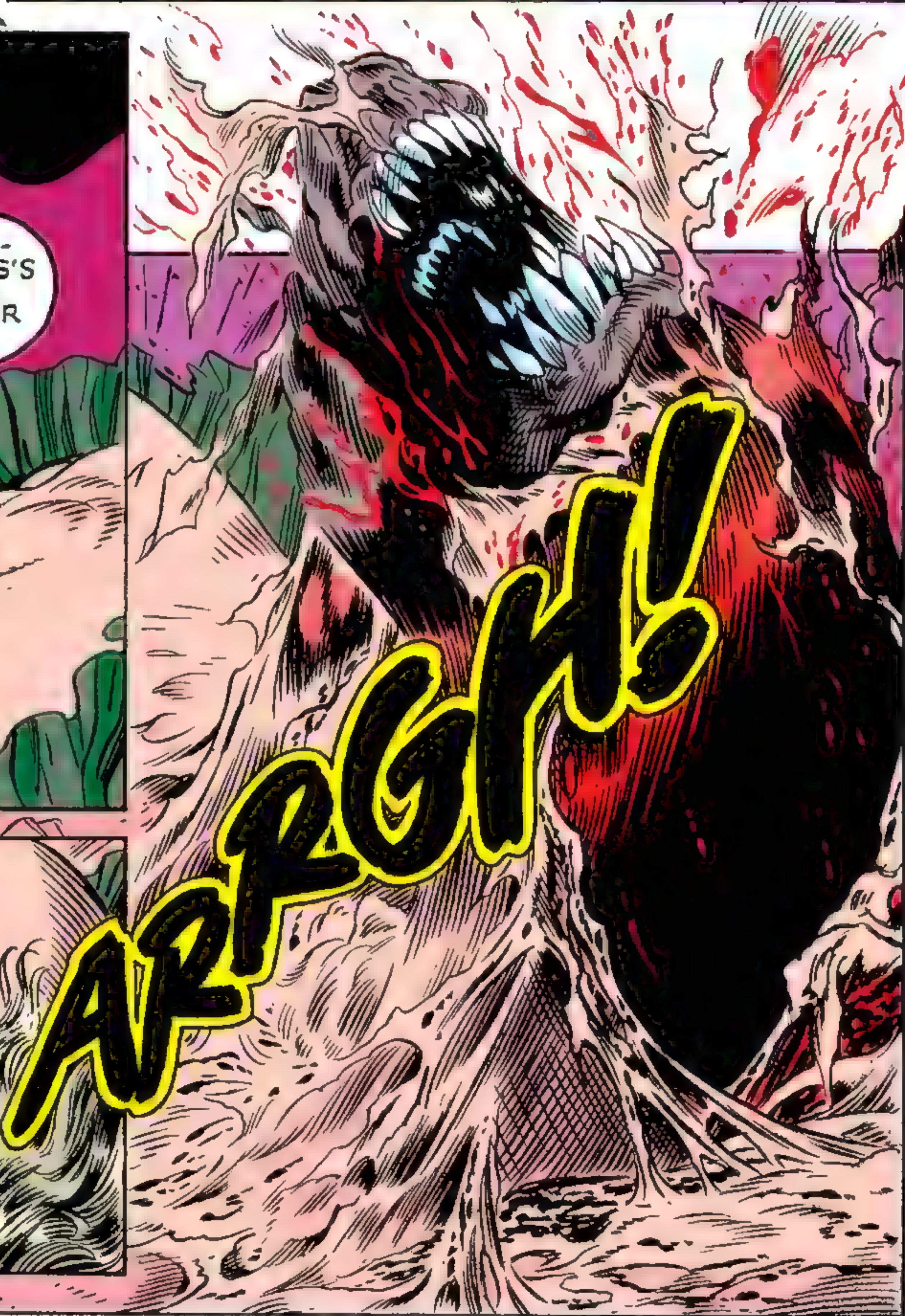
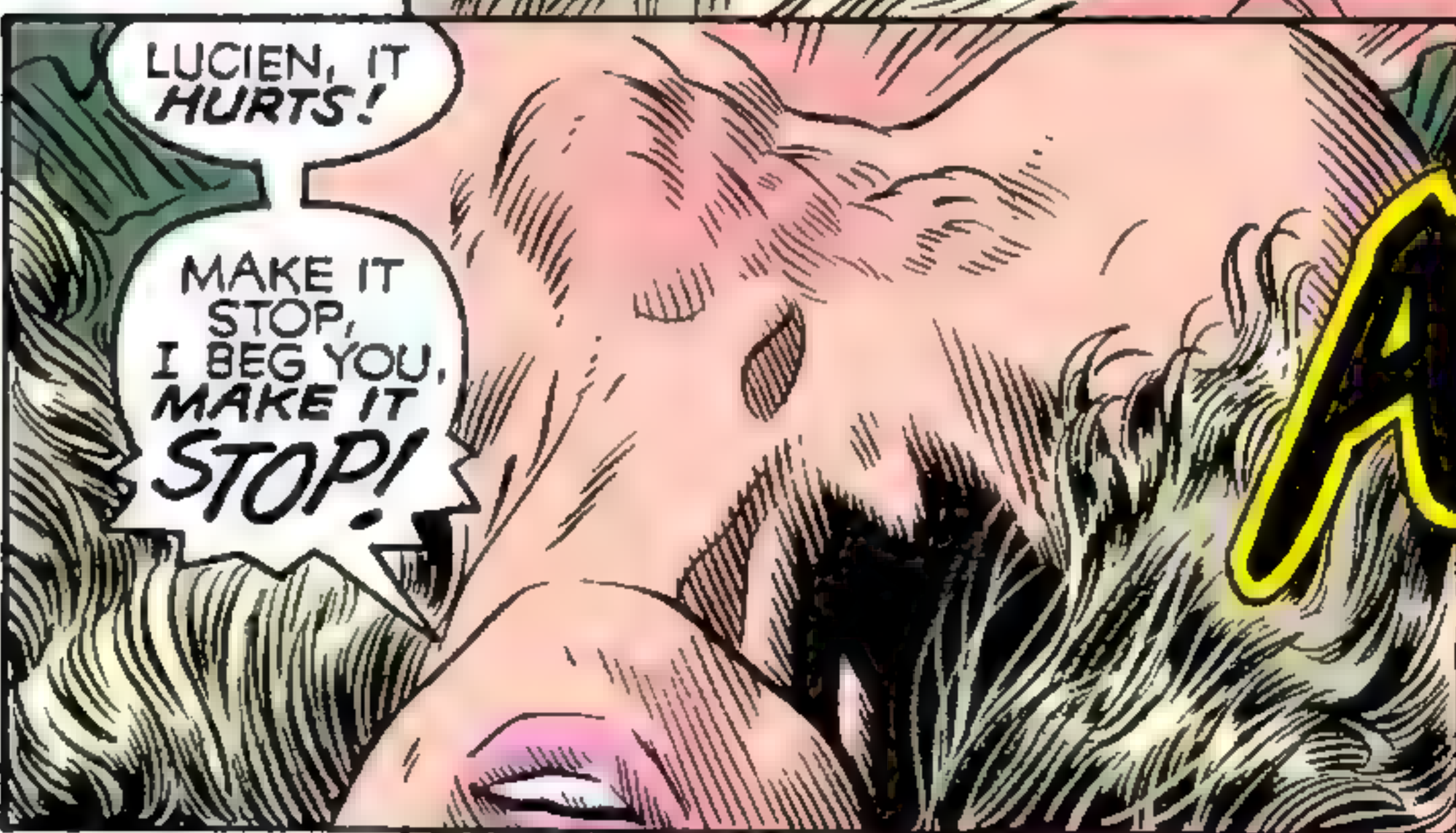
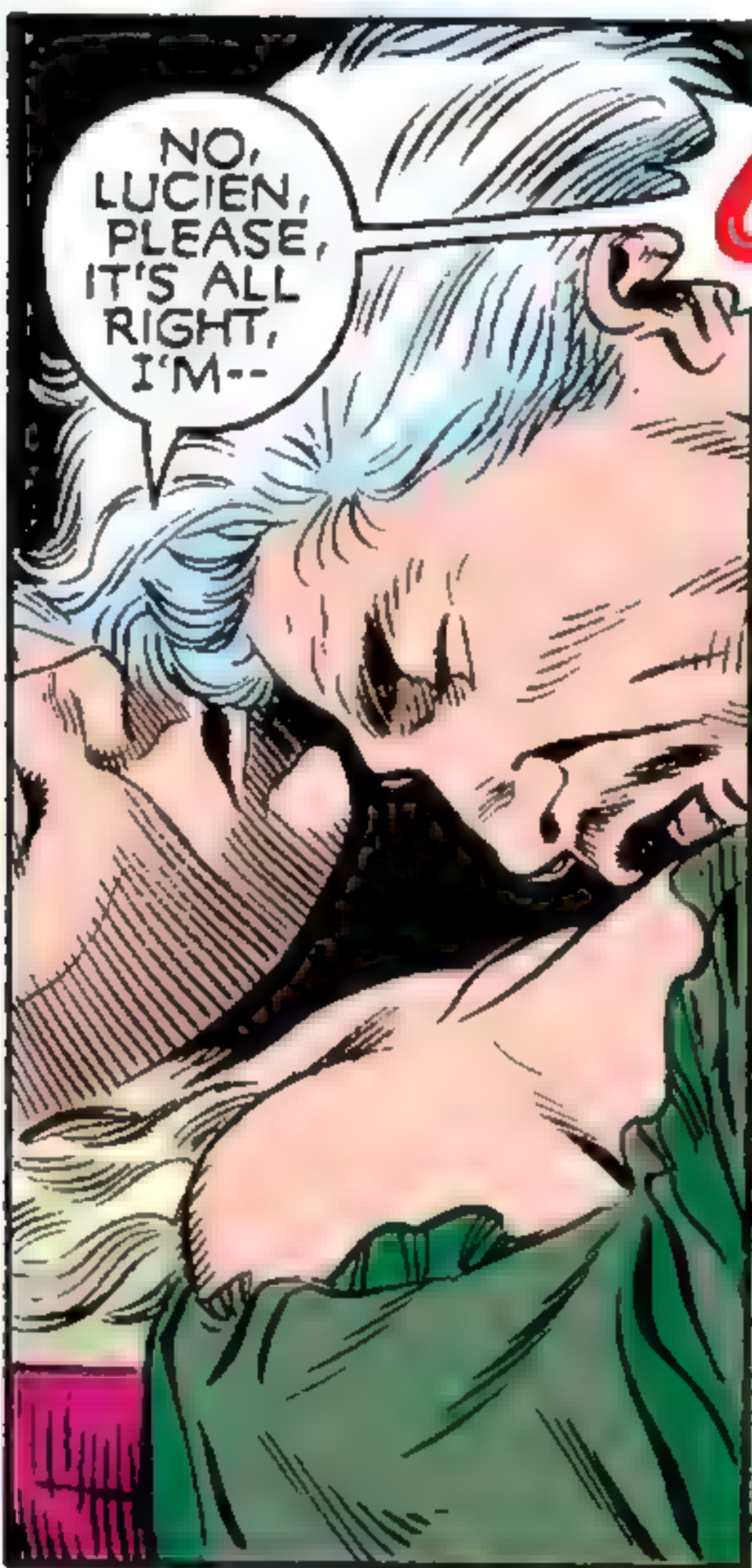
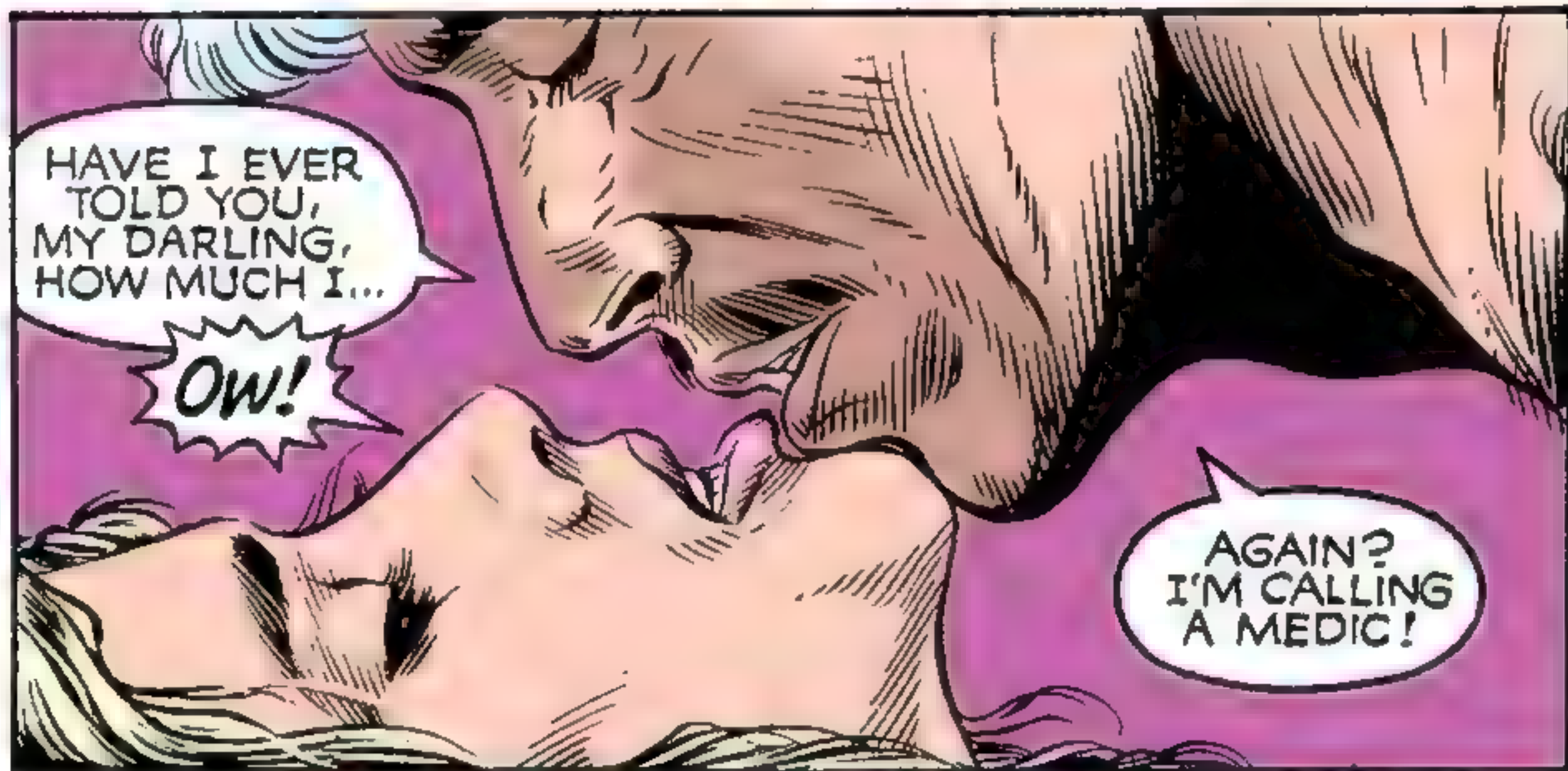
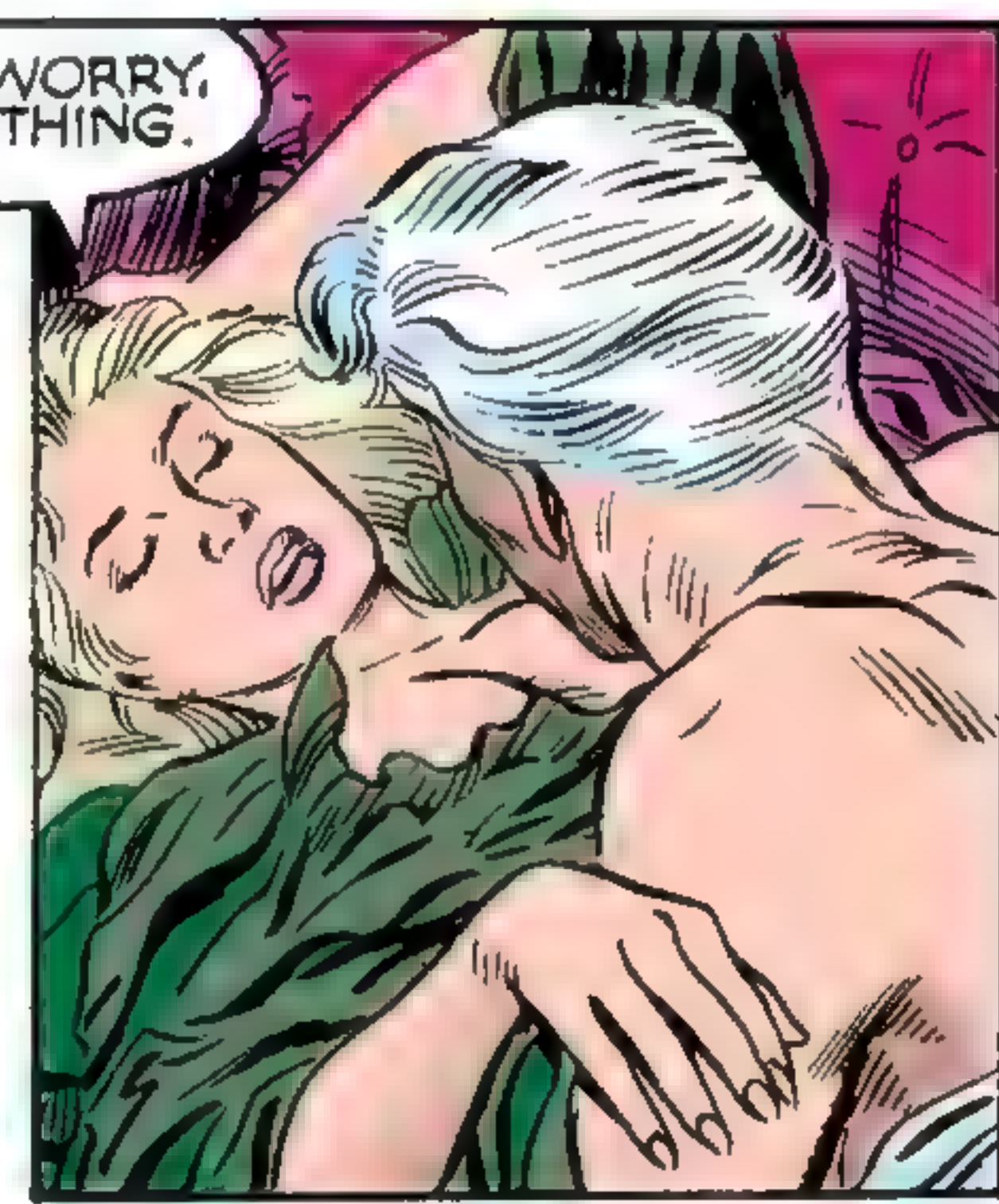
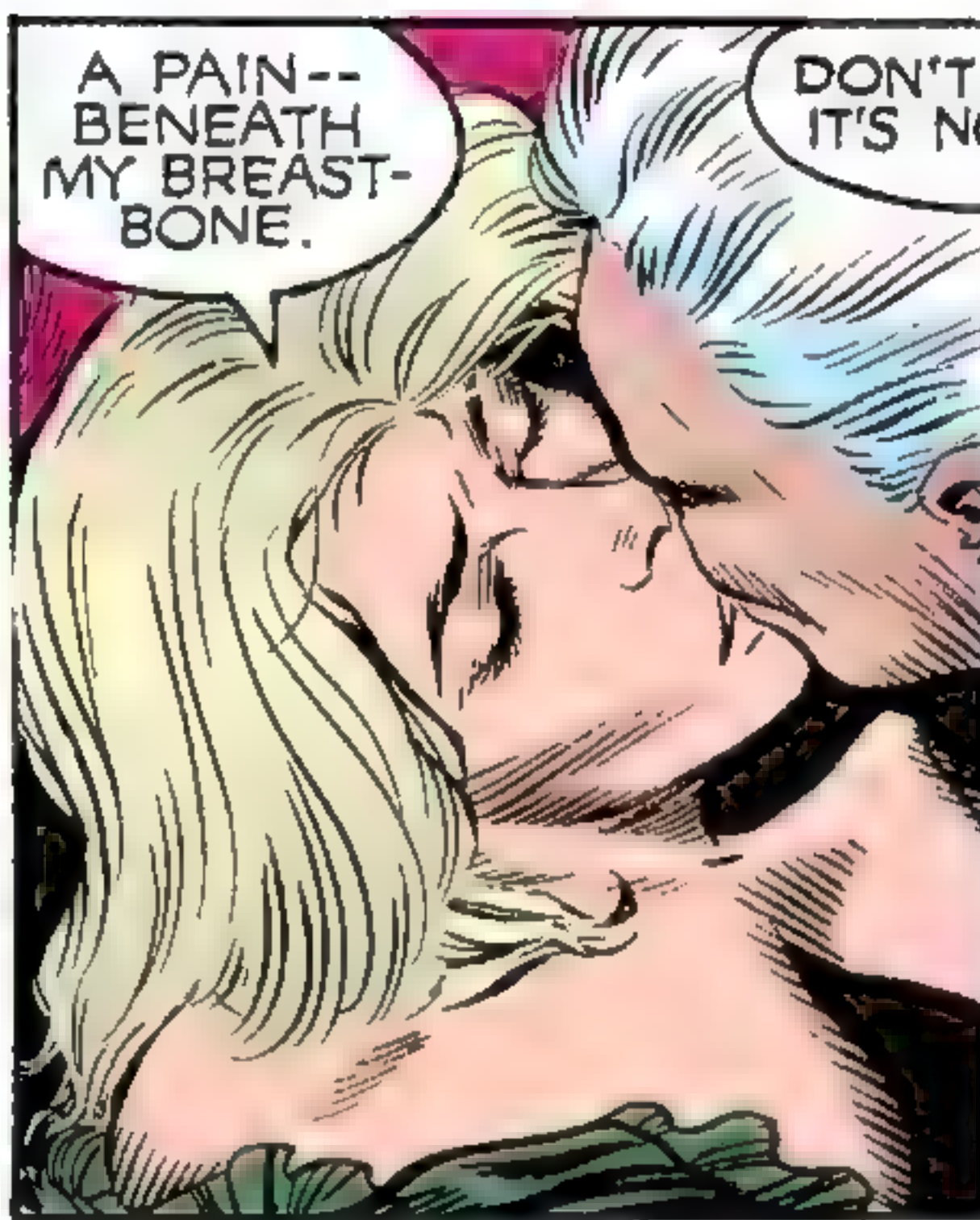
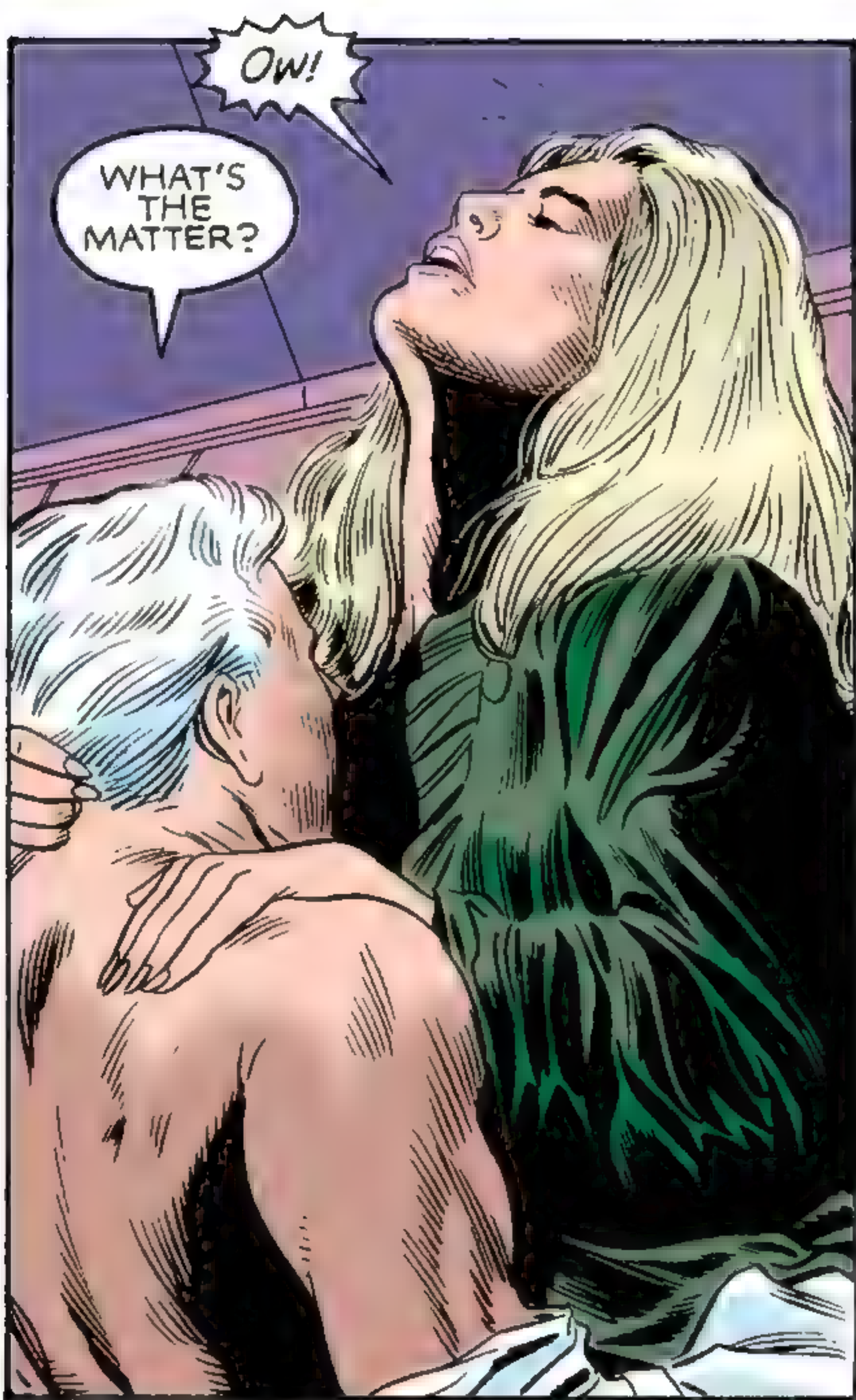
IT'S VERY LATE.
WHY DON'T YOU
COME TO BED?

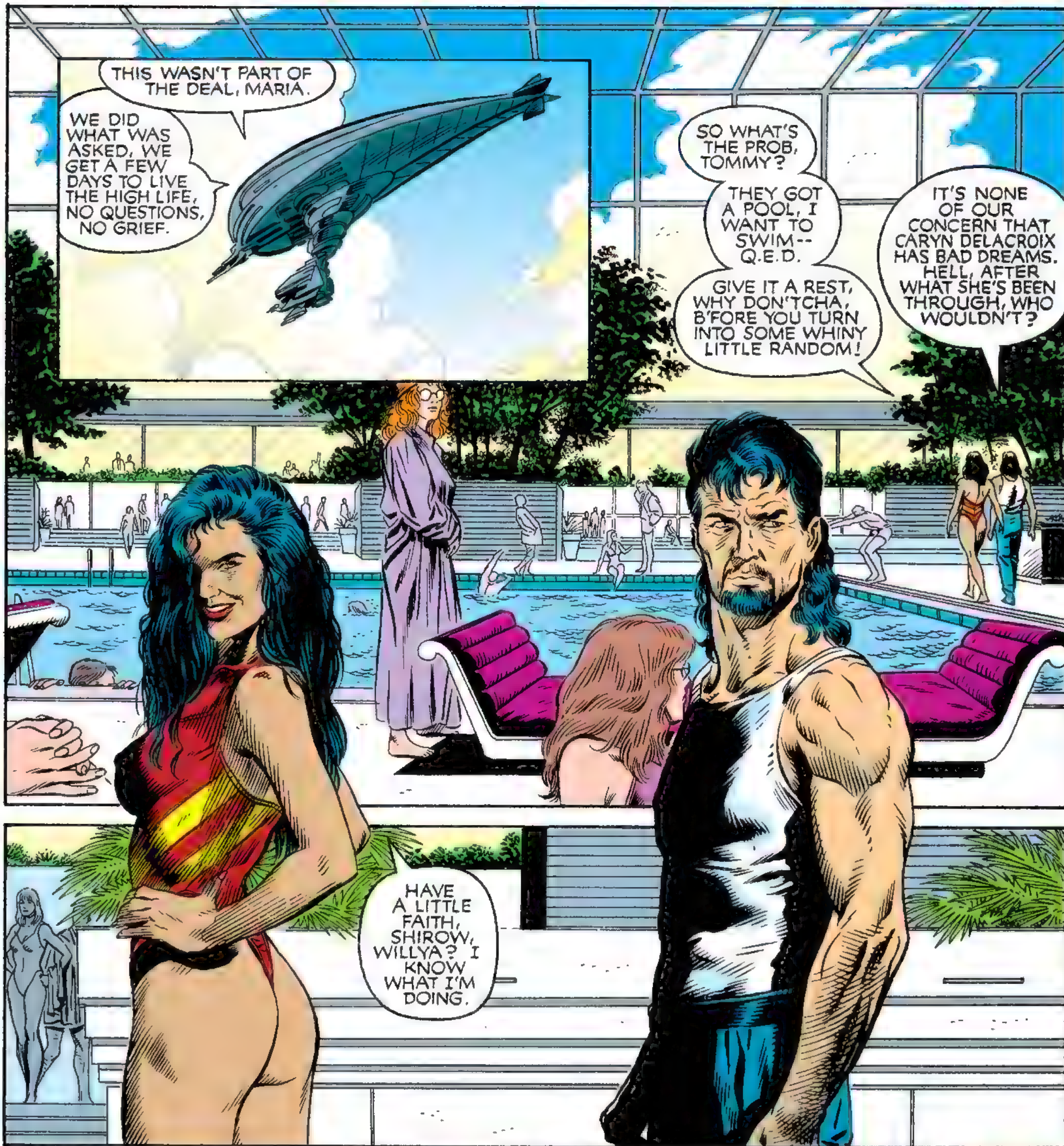
I CAN'T
SLEEP.



WELL THEN,
MY LOVE, WE'LL
SIMPLY HAVE TO
FIND SOME
OTHER WAY...

TO PASS
THE TIME.





THIS WASN'T PART OF THE DEAL, MARIA.

WE DID WHAT WAS ASKED, WE GET A FEW DAYS TO LIVE THE HIGH LIFE, NO QUESTIONS, NO GRIEF.

SO WHAT'S THE PROB, TOMMY?

THEY GOT A POOL, I WANT TO SWIM-- Q.E.D.

GIVE IT A REST, WHY DON'TCHA, B'FORE YOU TURN INTO SOME WHINY LITTLE RANDOM!

IT'S NONE OF OUR CONCERN THAT CARYN DELACROIX HAS BAD DREAMS. HELL, AFTER WHAT SHE'S BEEN THROUGH, WHO WOULDN'T?

HAVE A LITTLE FAITH, SHIROW, WILLYA? I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING.

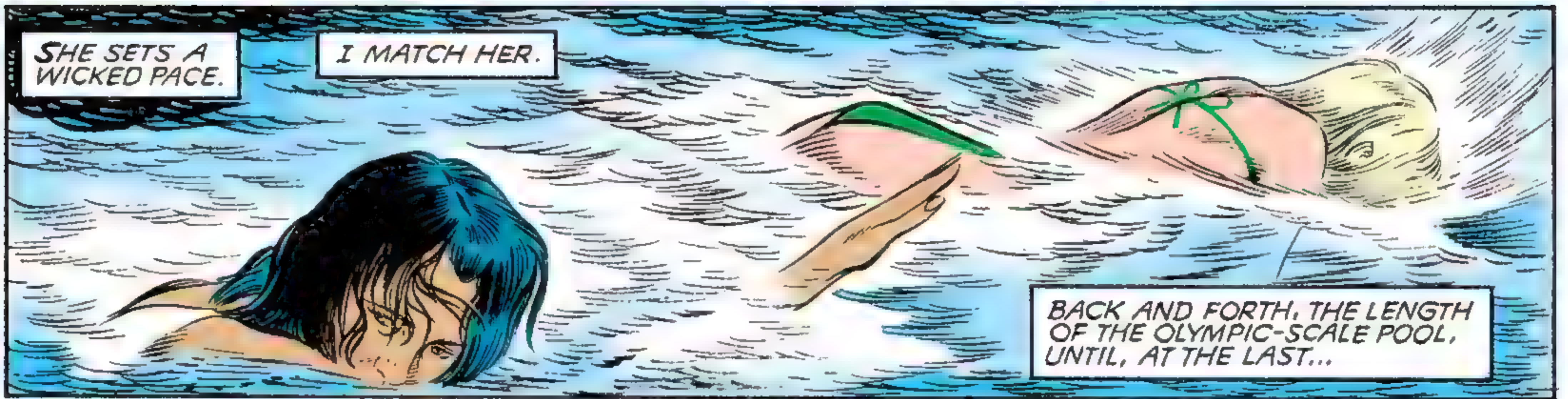
FAMOUS LAST WORDS, DeMEDICI!

UP YOURS!

THE WOMAN COMES UP OUT OF NOWHERE...

...WITH A STROKE TO MATCH MY OWN...

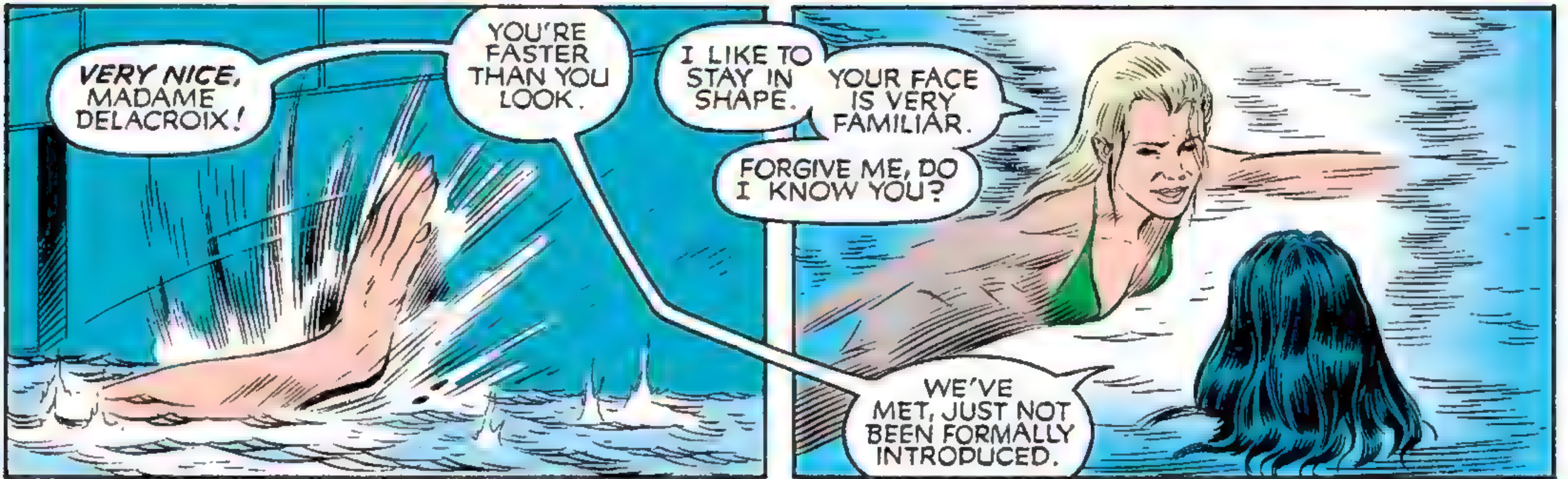
...AND A GRIN THAT OFFERS AN IRRESISTIBLE CHALLENGE.



SHE SETS A WICKED PACE.

I MATCH HER.

BACK AND FORTH, THE LENGTH OF THE OLYMPIC-SCALE POOL, UNTIL, AT THE LAST...



VERY NICE, MADAME DELACROIX!

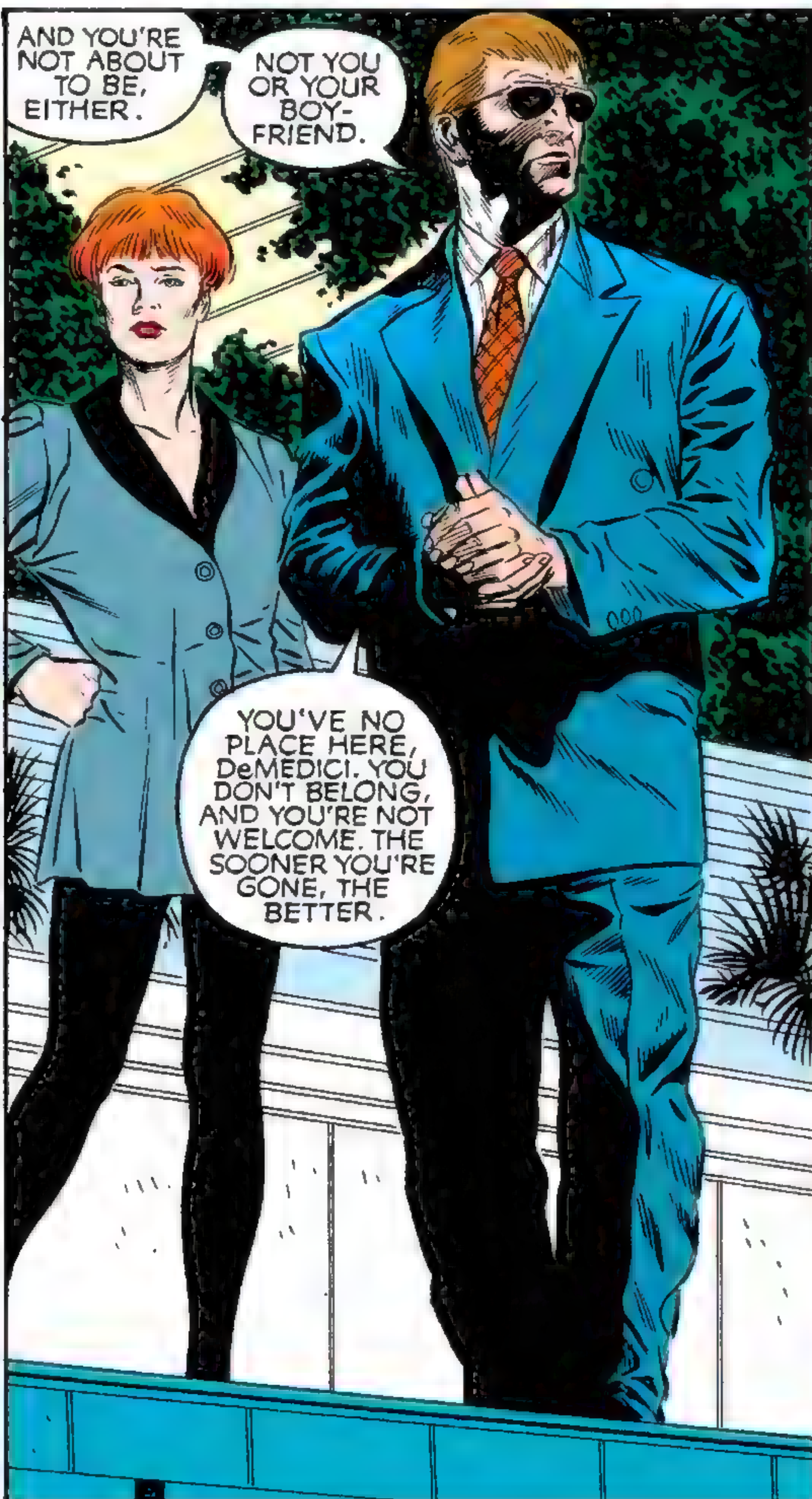
YOU'RE FASTER THAN YOU LOOK.

I LIKE TO STAY IN SHAPE.

YOUR FACE IS VERY FAMILIAR.

FORGIVE ME, DO I KNOW YOU?

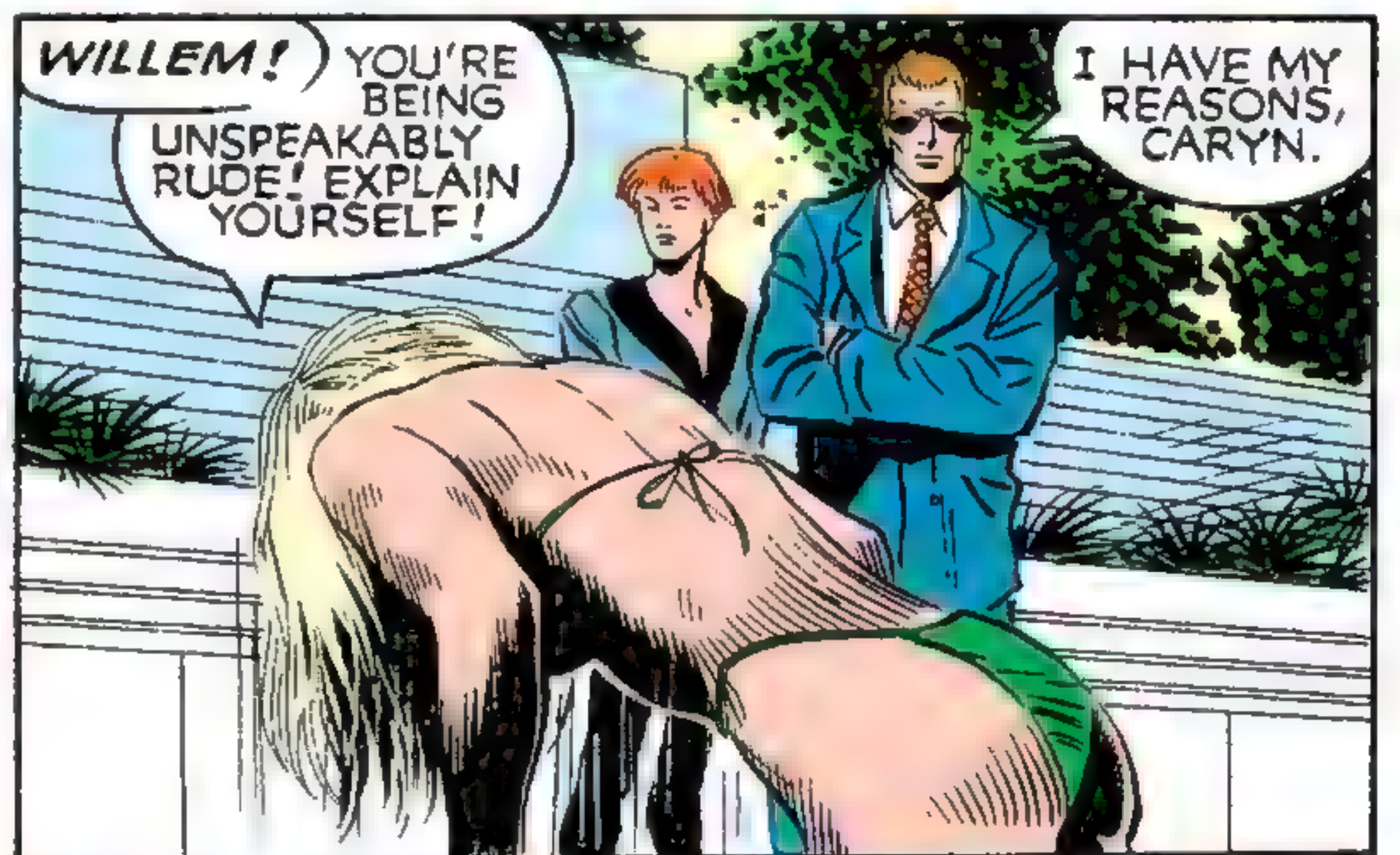
WE'VE MET, JUST NOT BEEN FORMALLY INTRODUCED.



AND YOU'RE NOT ABOUT TO BE, EITHER.

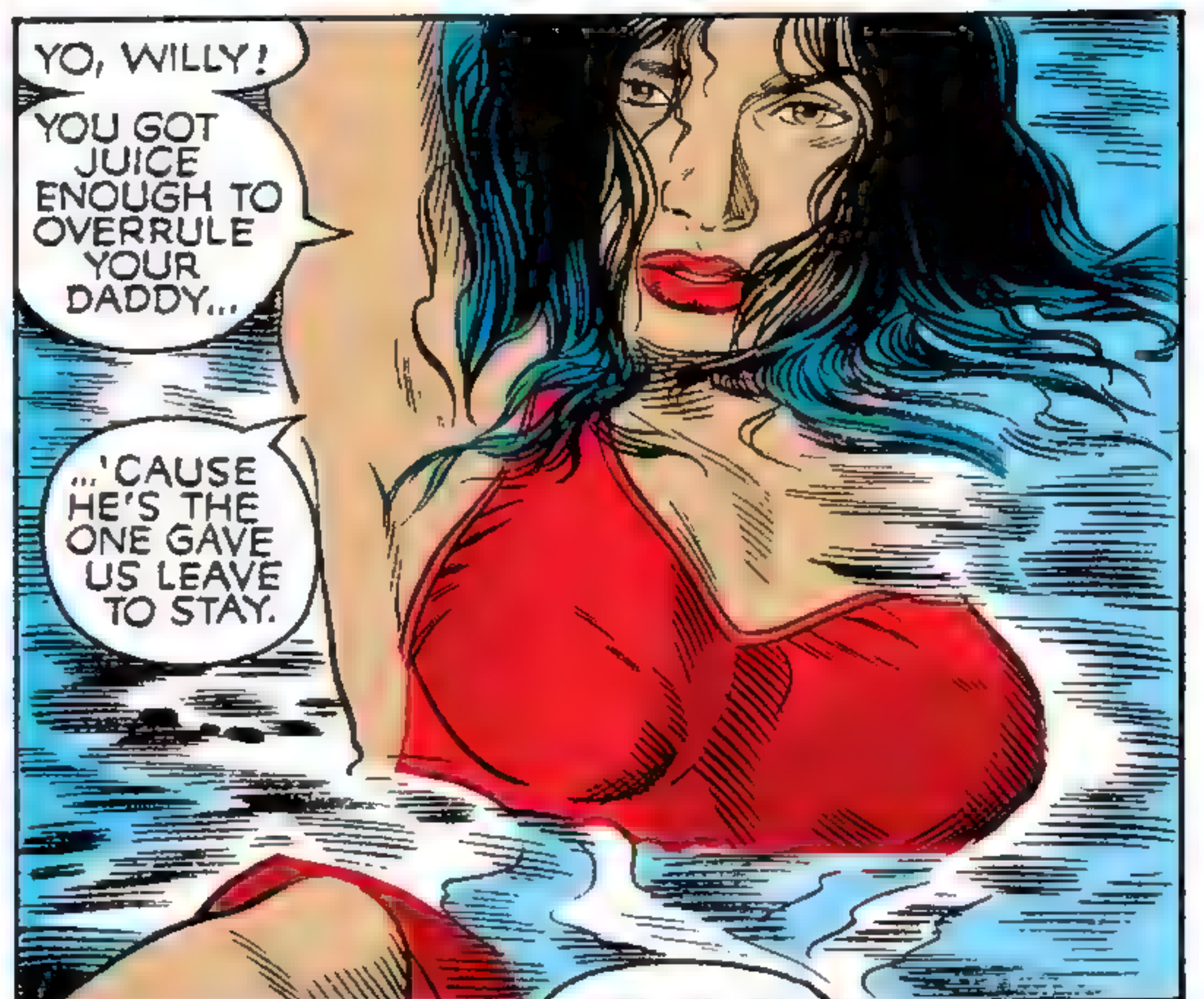
NOT YOU OR YOUR BOY-FRIEND.

YOU'VE NO PLACE HERE, DeMEDICI. YOU DON'T BELONG, AND YOU'RE NOT WELCOME. THE SOONER YOU'RE GONE, THE BETTER.



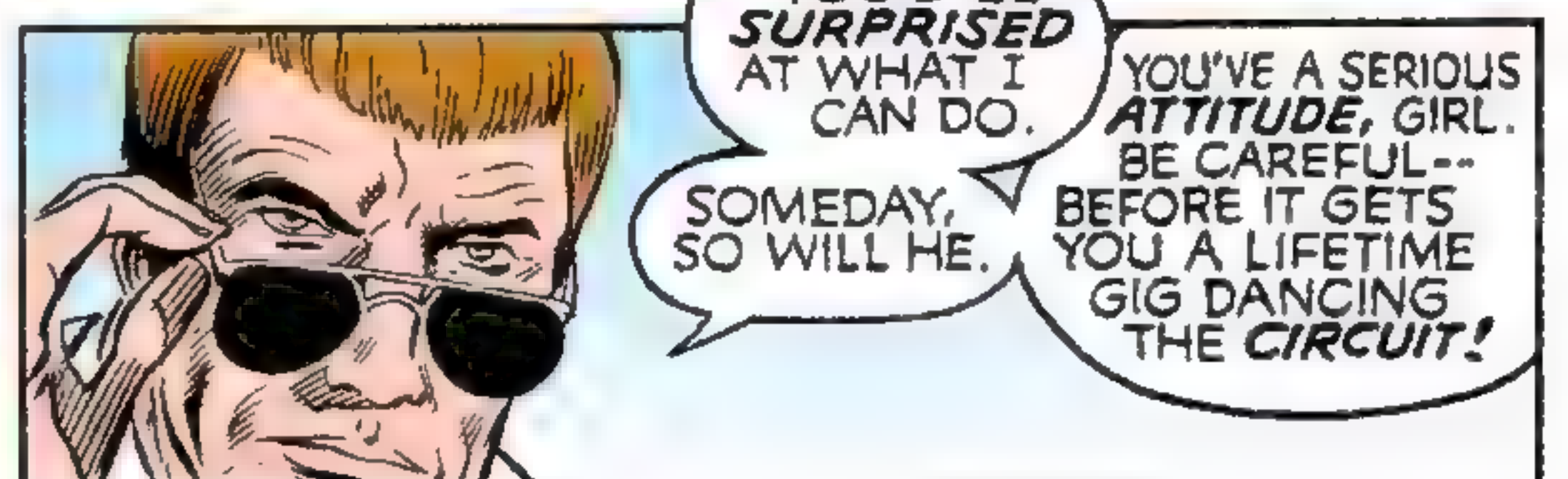
WILLEM! YOU'RE BEING UNSPEAKABLY RUDE! EXPLAIN YOURSELF!

I HAVE MY REASONS, CARYN.



YO, WILLY! YOU GOT JUICE ENOUGH TO OVERRULE YOUR DADDY...

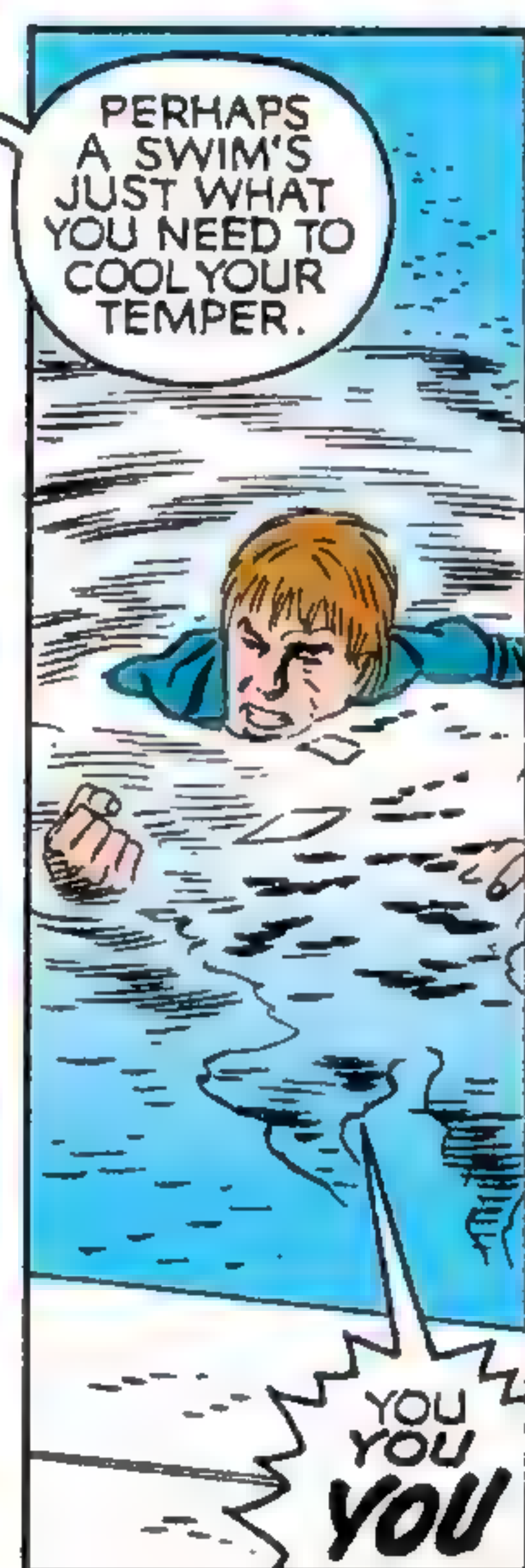
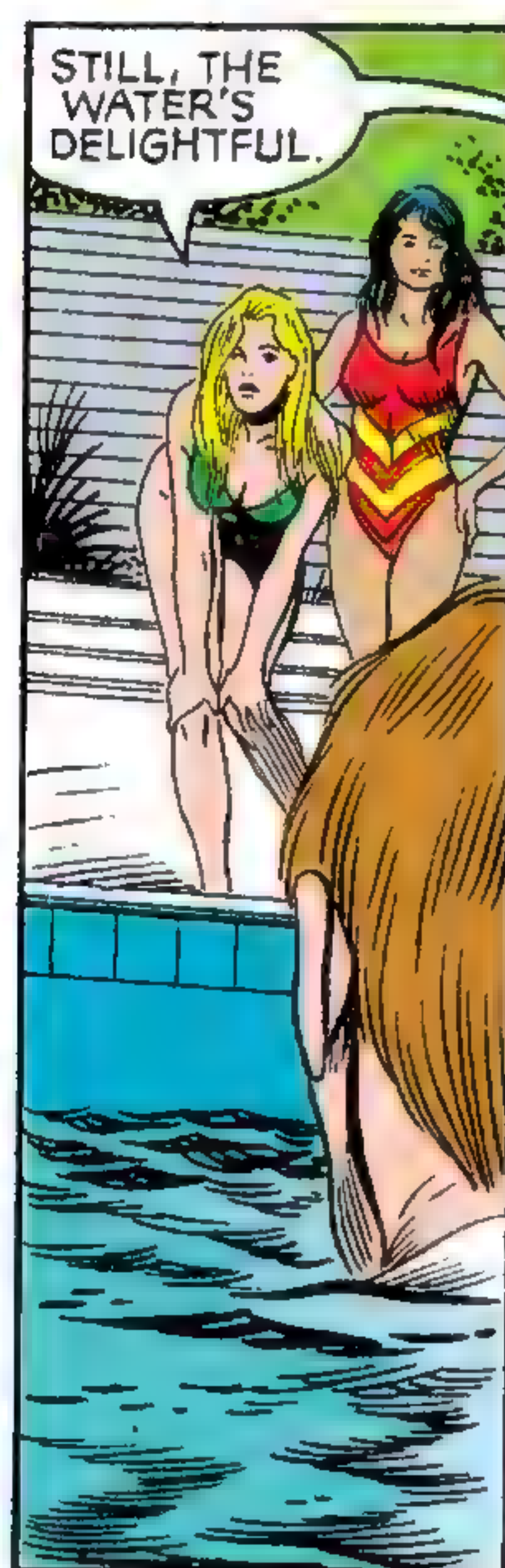
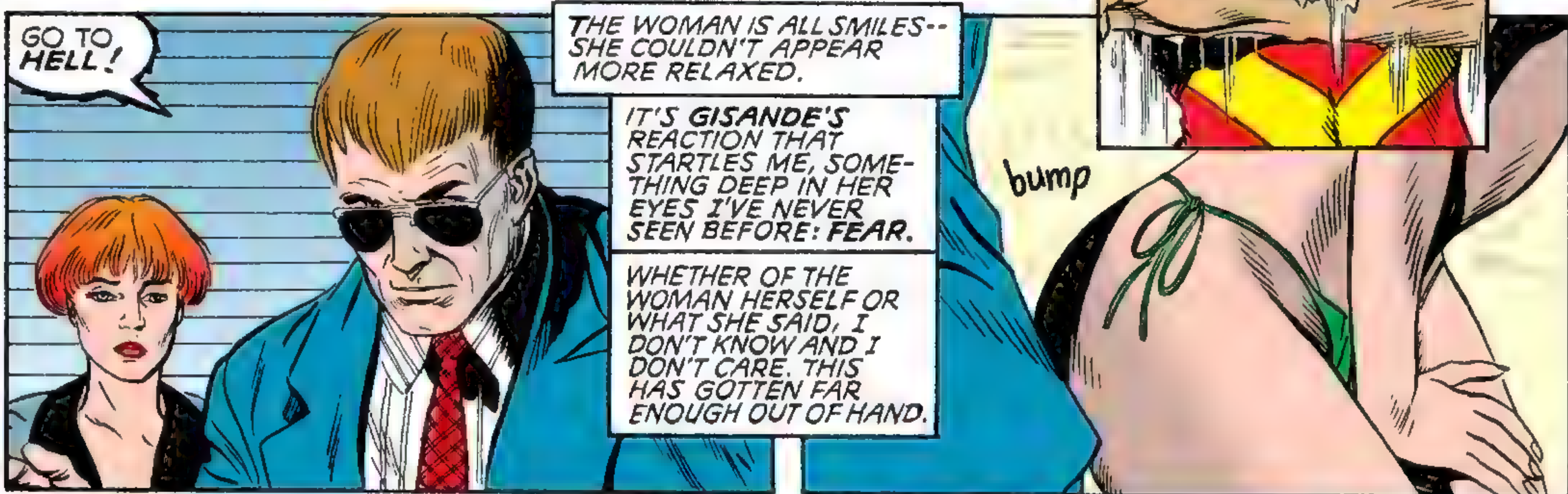
'CAUSE HE'S THE ONE GAVE US LEAVE TO STAY.

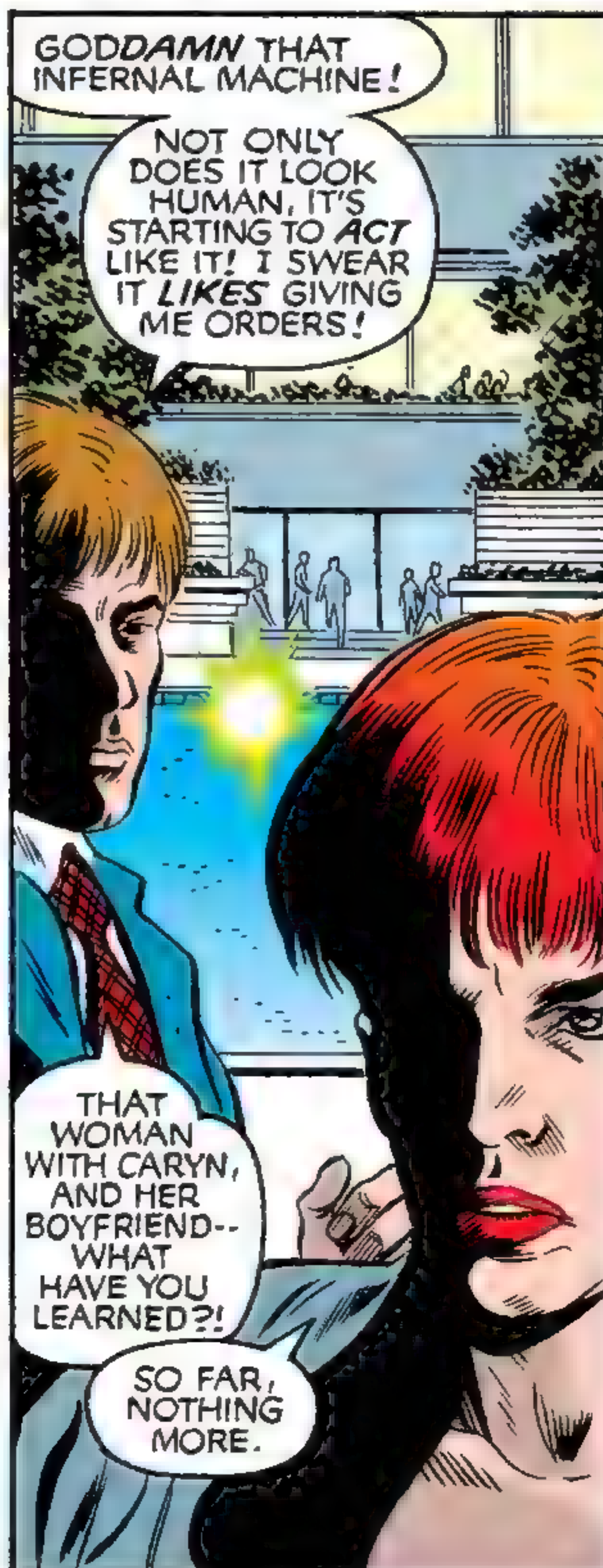
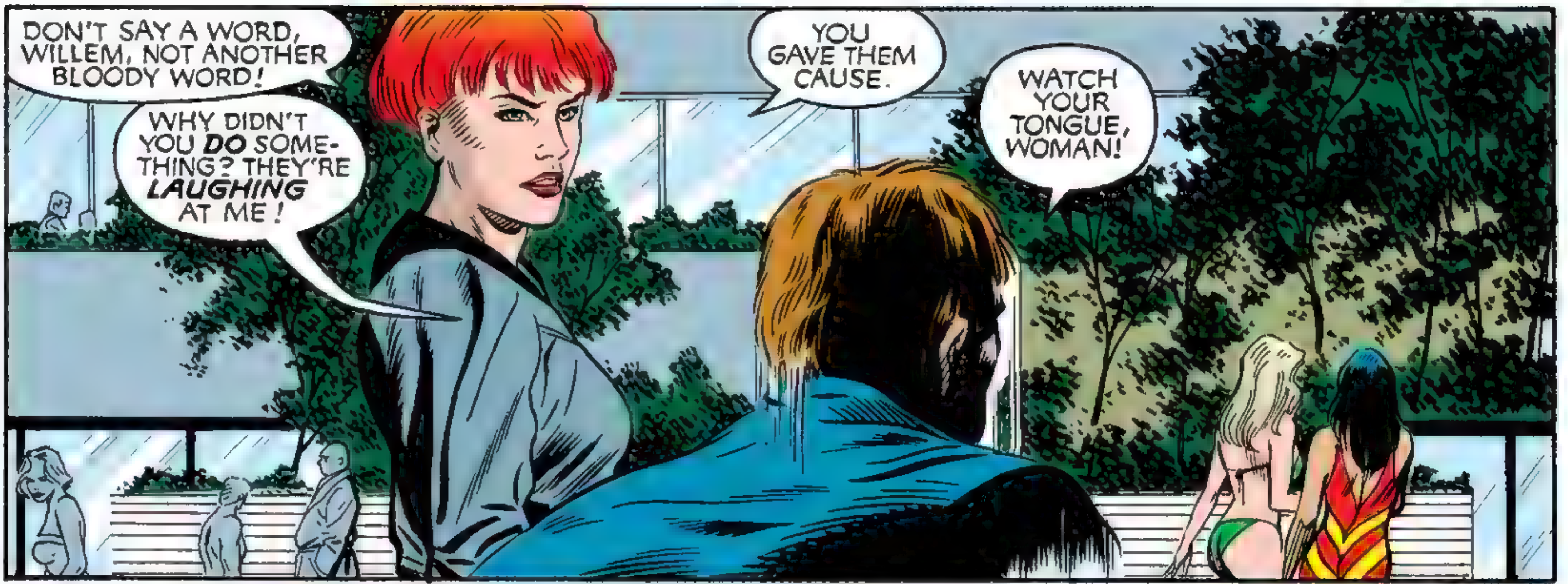


YOU'D BE SURPRISED AT WHAT I CAN DO.

SOMEDAY, SO WILL HE.

YOU'VE A SERIOUS ATTITUDE, GIRL. BE CAREFUL-- BEFORE IT GETS YOU A LIFETIME GIG DANCING THE CIRCUIT!





ATTENTION: This evening's frolic in the Gallery is scheduled for the live enjoyment of citizenry classes seven through nine. For all other citizens, the entertainment will be simulcast on channel 97...

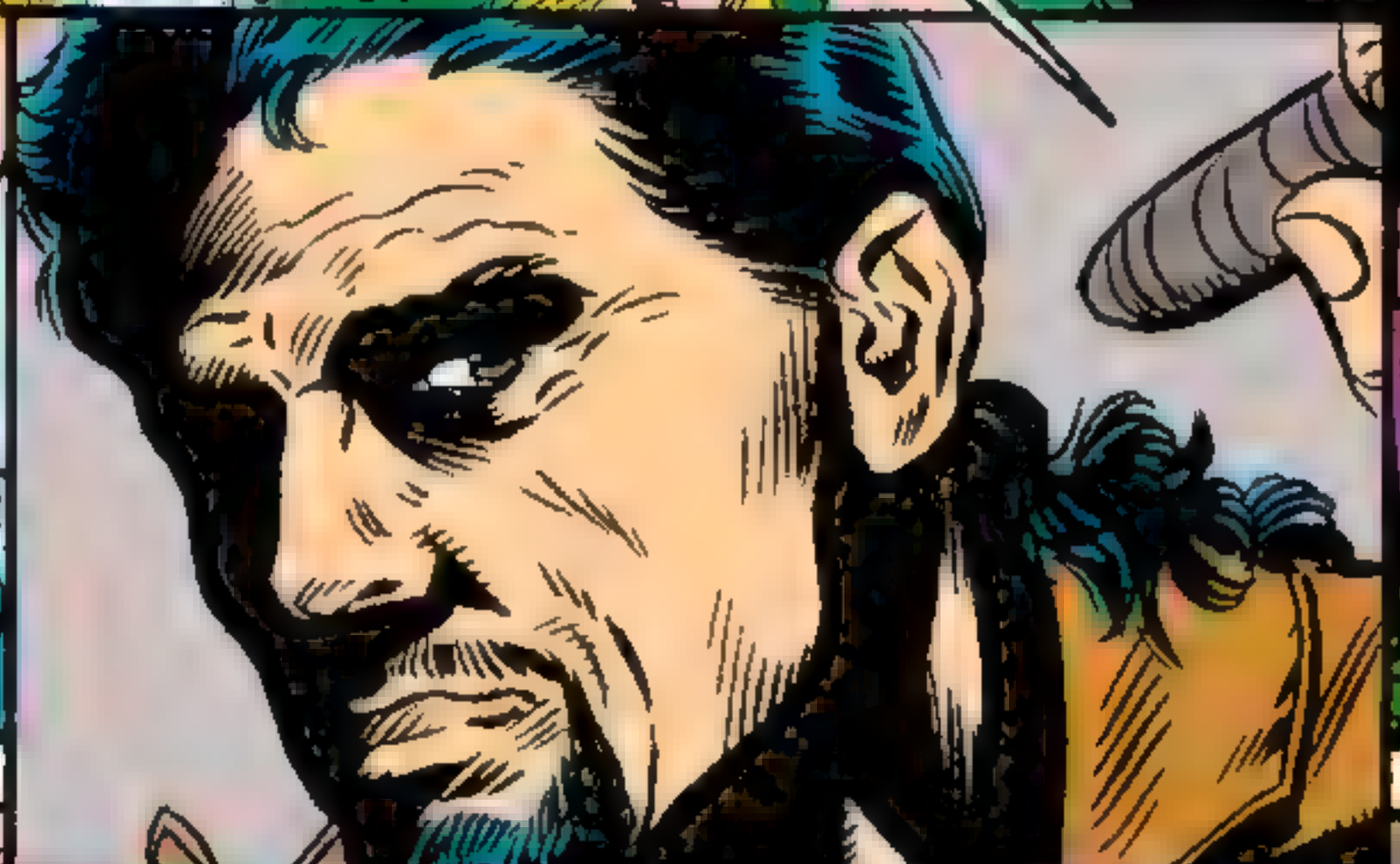
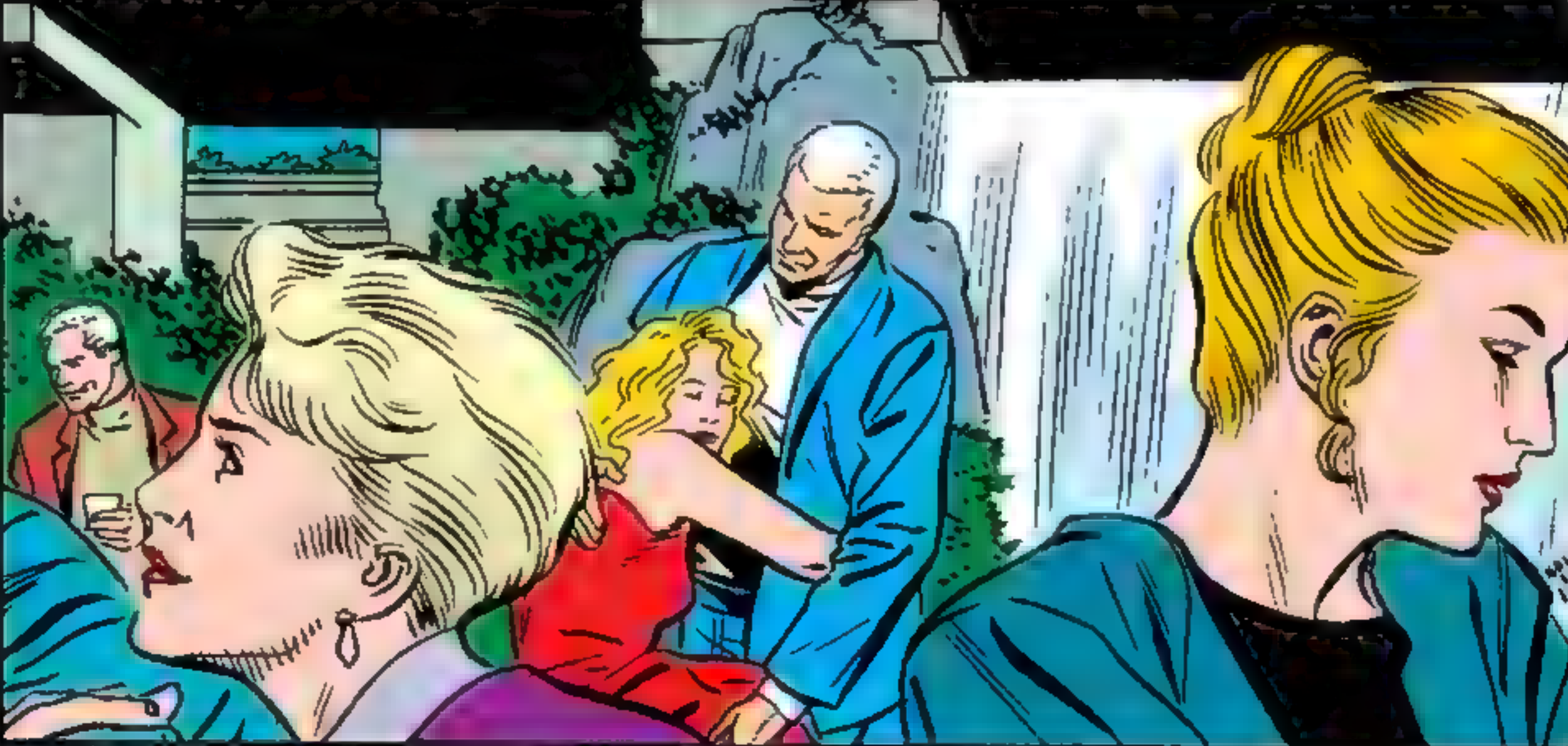
LIKE THE VIEW, SON?

THEY'RE CALLED **TROPHIES**, AN' WITH GOOD REASON.

I BEG YOUR PARDON?

THOSE LADIES YOU'RE LOOKIN' AT DOWN ON THE PROMENADE.

MAN PUTS IN HIS TIME, MAKES HIS MARK ON THE WORLD, STANDS TO REASON HE'S EARNED SOME REWARDS.



SUPPOSE HE'S ALREADY MARRIED?

MY GOD, WE'RE NOT BARBARIANS!

IT'S JUST, THERE COMES A TIME WHEN A MAN NEEDS TO KNOW HE CAN STILL COMMAND RESPECT, THAT HE CAN HOLD HIS OWN WITH THE YOUNGER MEMBERS OF THE PACK.

THEY HAVE BEAUTIFUL WOMEN, WE HAVE **MORE** BEAUTIFUL WOMEN. GIVES 'EM SOMETHING TO SHOOT FOR, BUT ALSO PUTS 'EM IN THEIR PLACE.

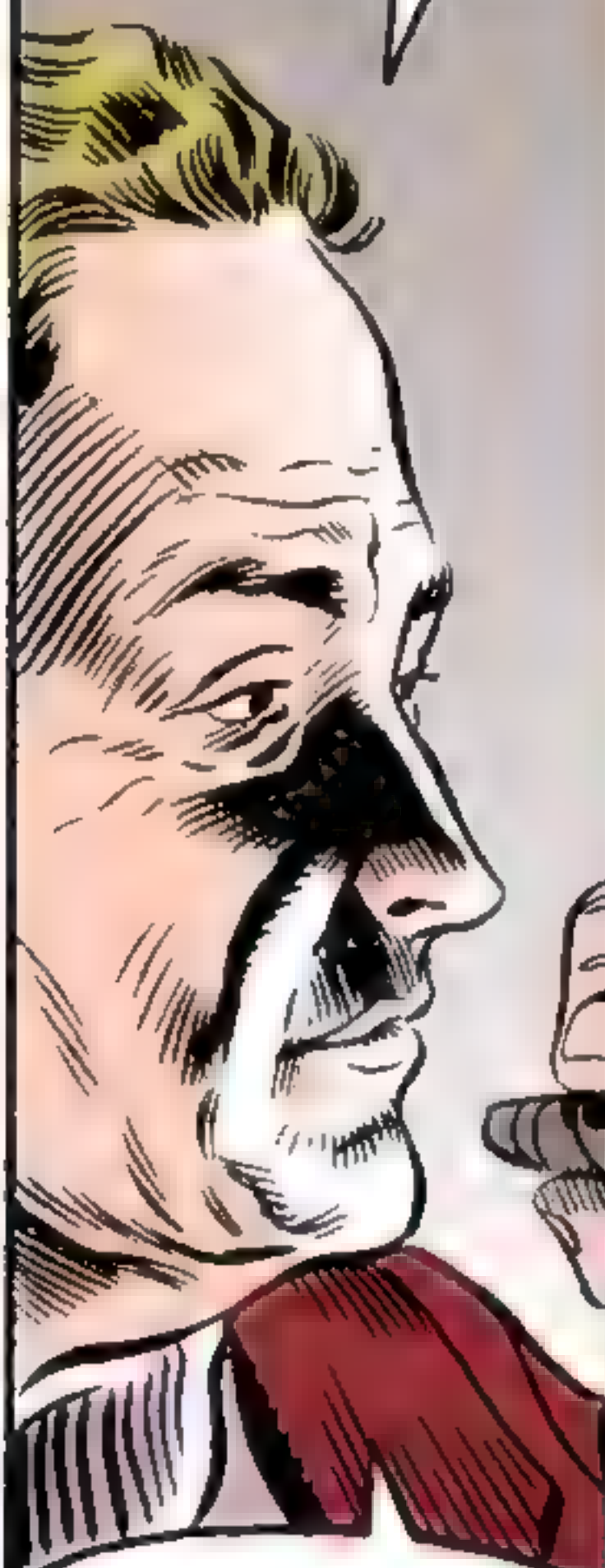


AND THE WOMAN YOU MARRIED FOR LOVE, WHO'S SHOWING HER AGE, SHE ISN'T... APPROPRIATE FOR THAT SCENARIO?

THE MAN'S THE BREAD-WINNER, BOY.

IT'S MY JOB TO PUT FOOD ON THE HEARTH TO EAT, AND THE WIFE'S TO TAKE CARE OF THE HOME.

THAT'S HOW IT'S ALWAYS BEEN. HUMAN NATURE, BOY, IMPRINTED ON THE GENES LONG BEFORE OUR TIME.



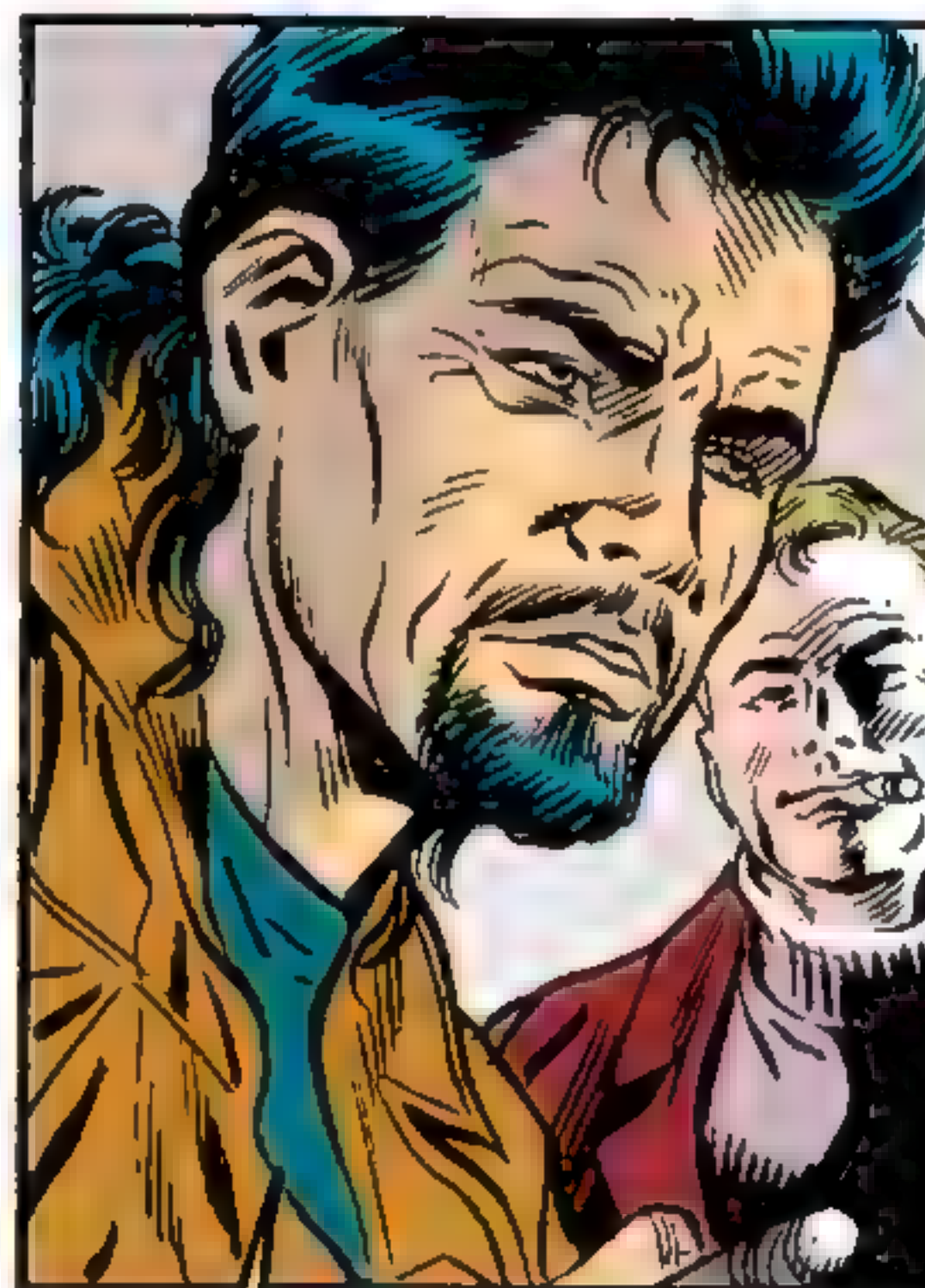
BESIDES, IT'S NOT LIKE THE TRUE WIVES ARE ABANDONED OR FORGOTTEN--NOT AT ALL. THEIR STATUS IS GUARANTEED BY LAW AND CUSTOM.

I DON'T FEEL GUILTY. WHAT I'VE GOT, I'VE EARNED. WHAT MY FAMILY-- WIFE AND KIDS TOGETHER-- HAVE GOT, I'VE EARNED.

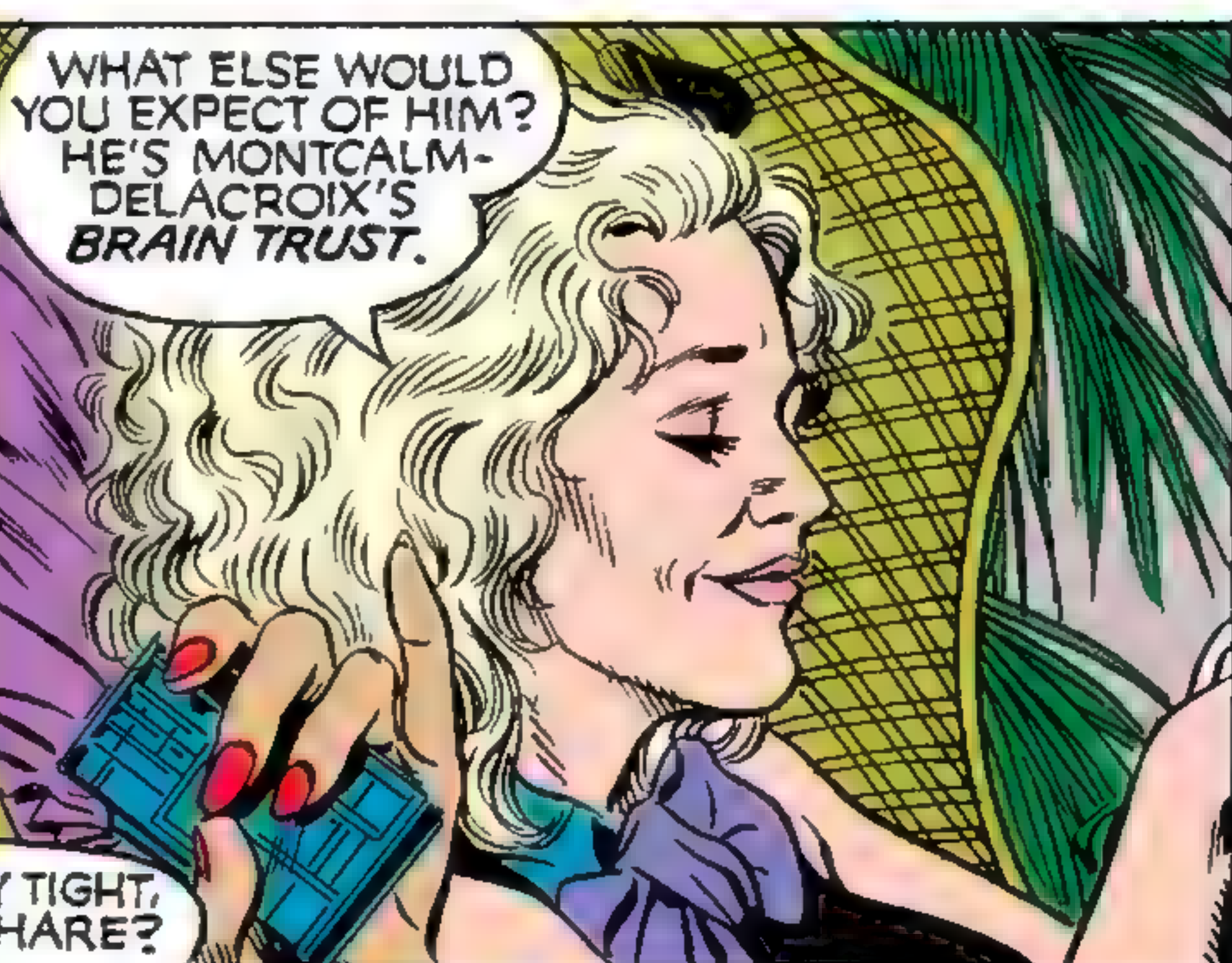
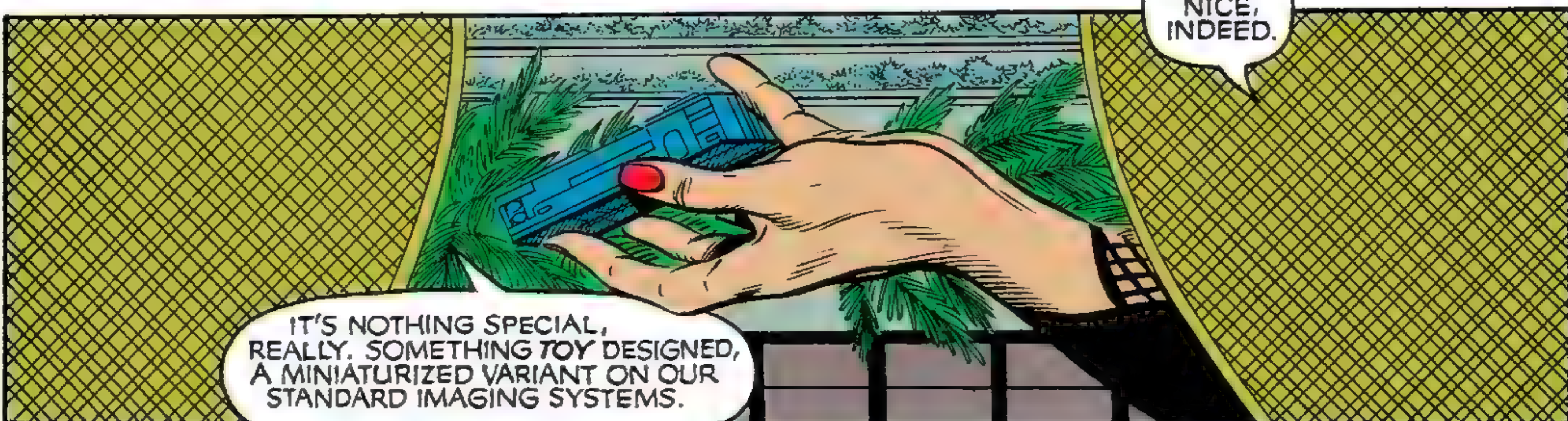
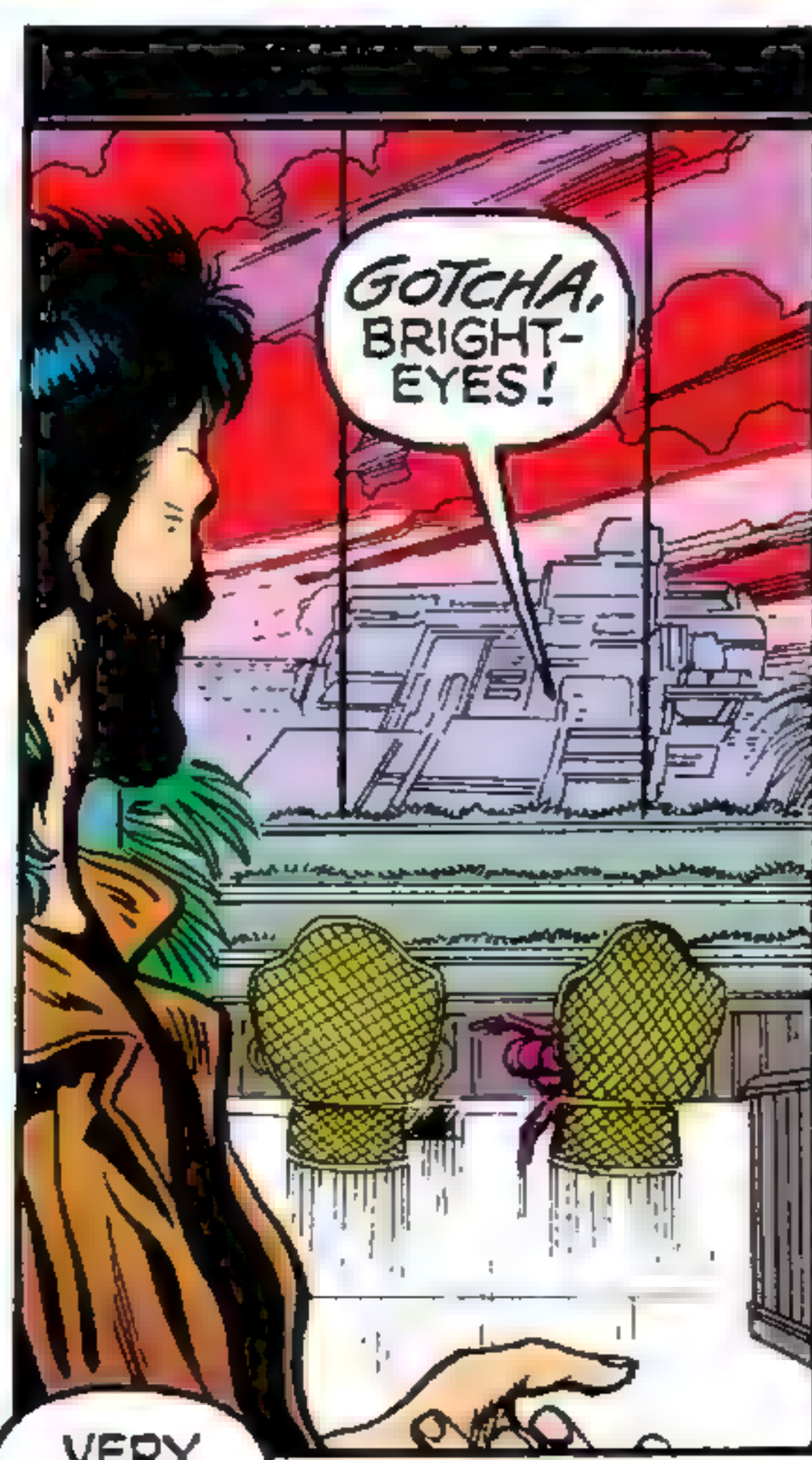
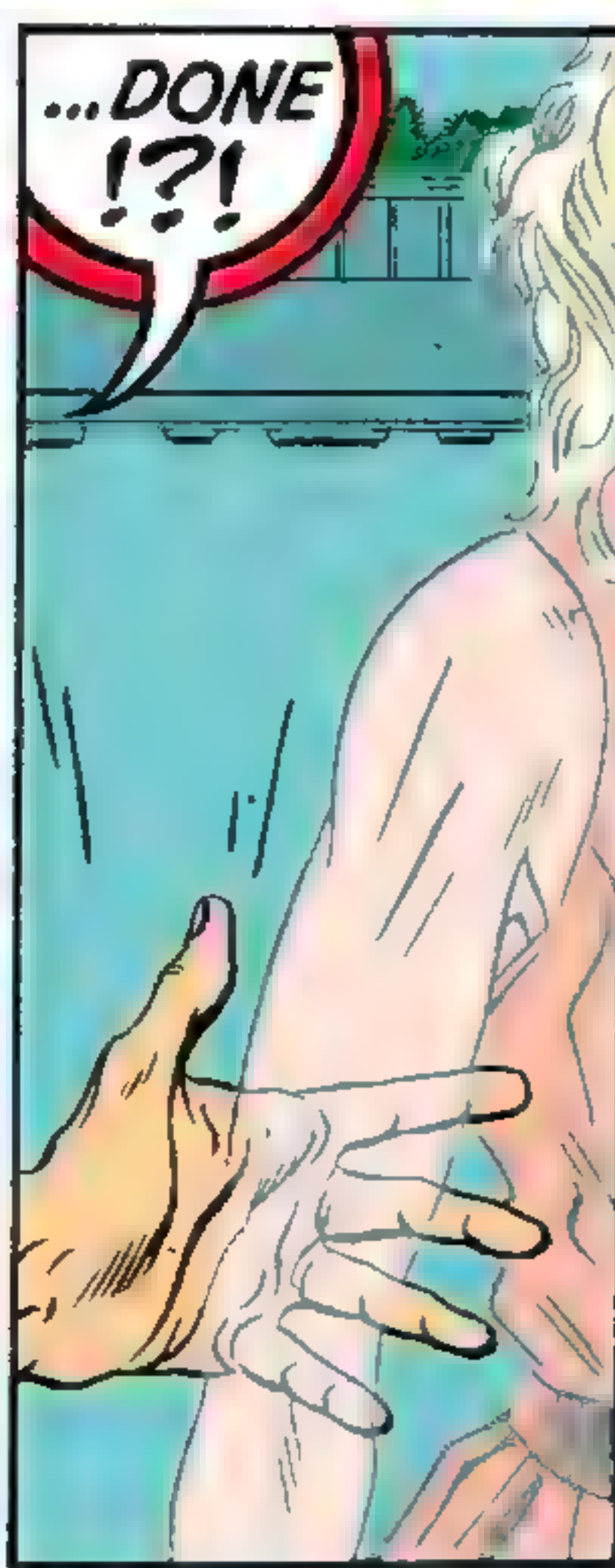
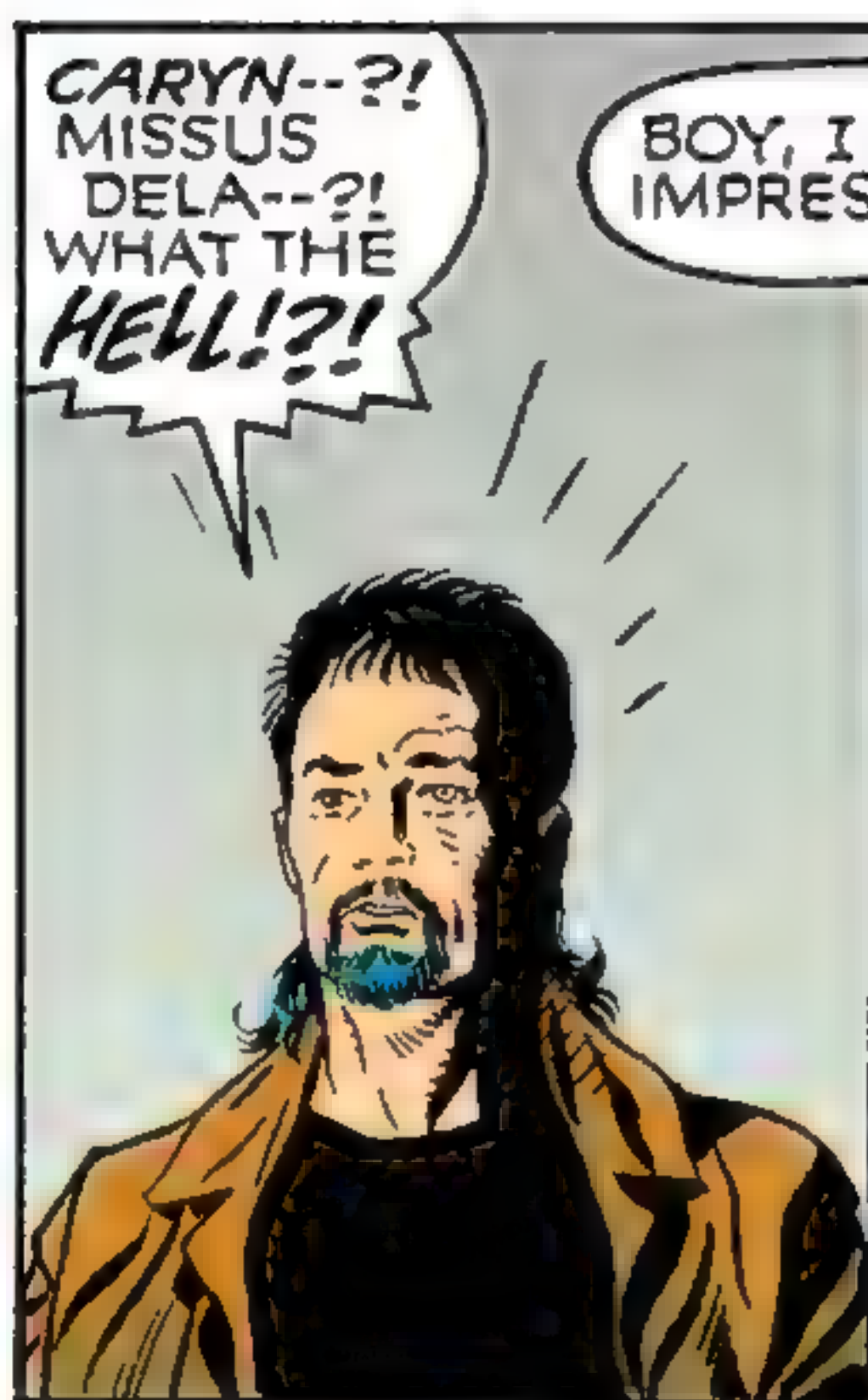
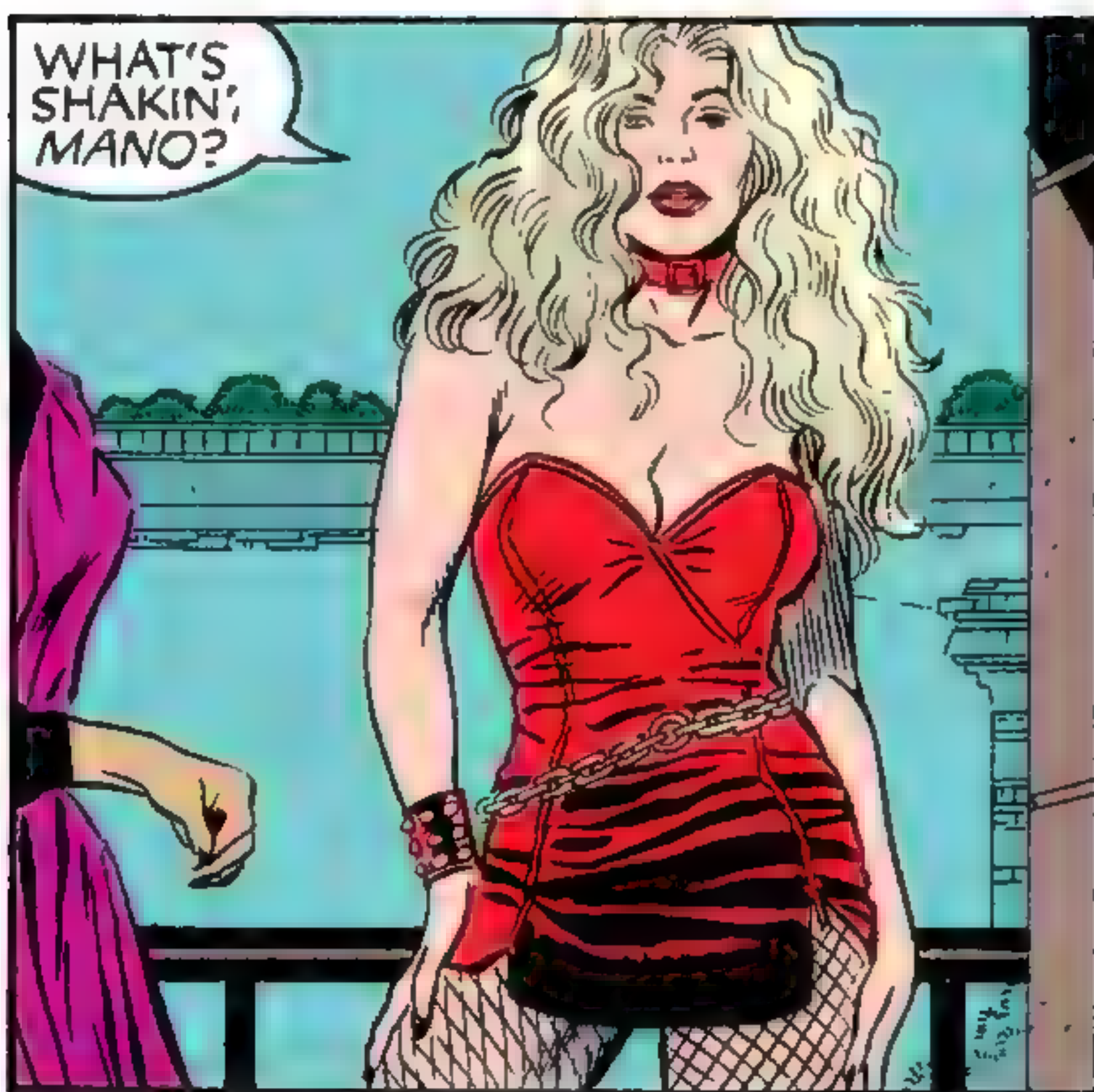
I TAKE THE RISKS-- IT'S MY ASS ON THE LINE, EVERY DAY-- ONLY RIGHT AND PROPER, I DESERVE MY SHARE OF THE REWARDS.

BUT I SEE I'M NOT TELLIN' YOU ANYTHING YOU DON'T ALREADY KNOW.

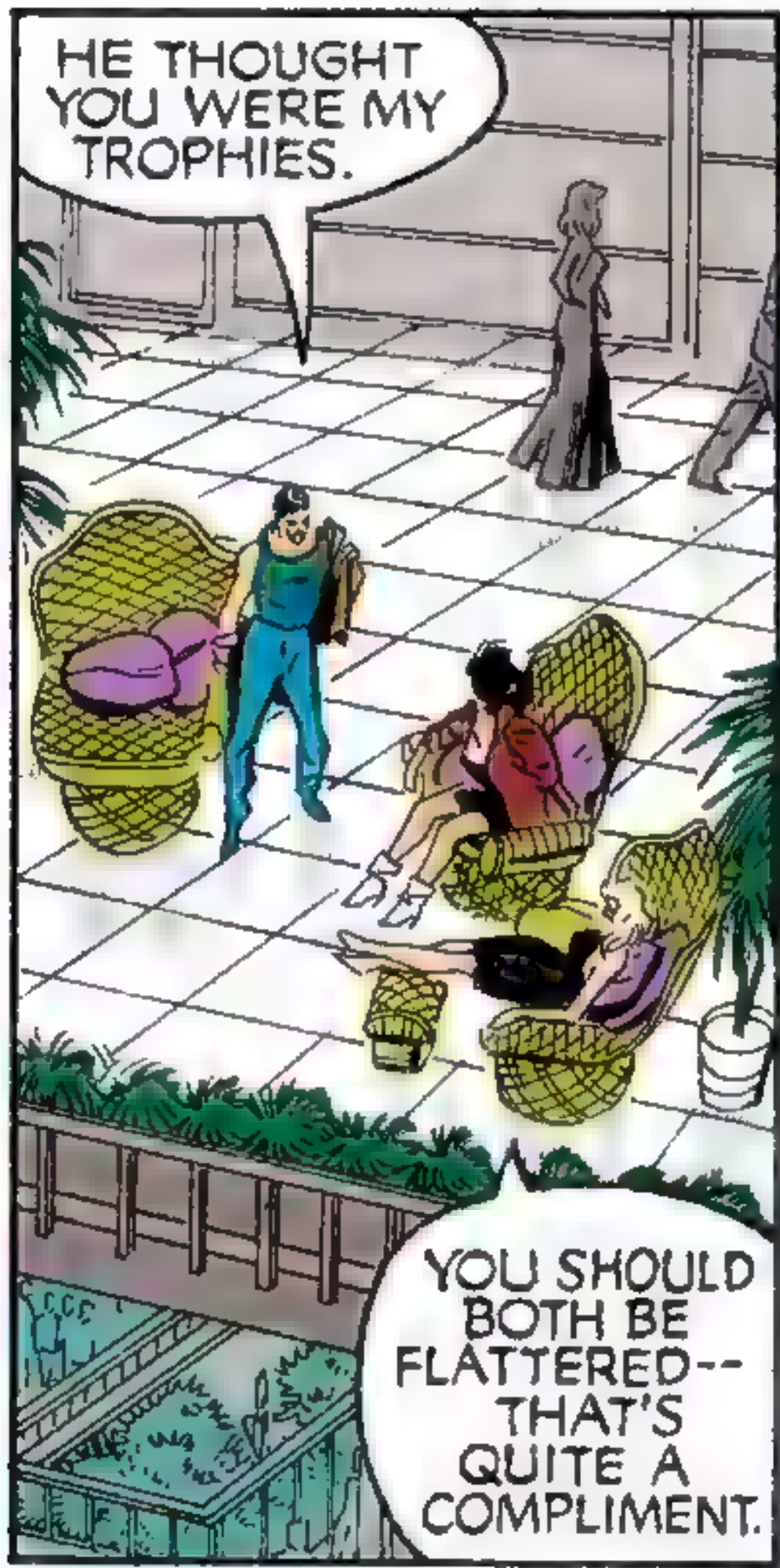
HELLO, TOMAS.



MARIA ?!?

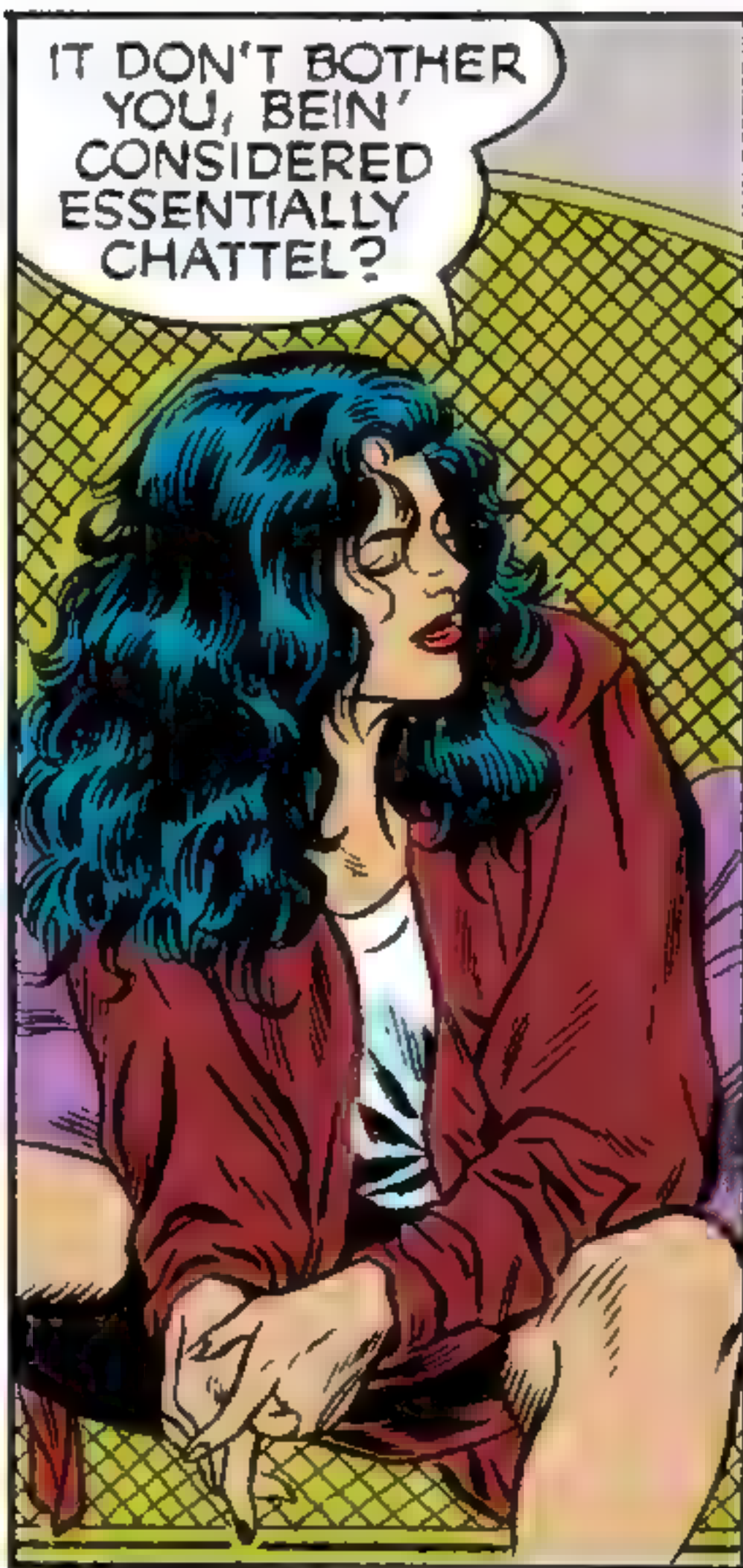


YOU TWO GUYS WERE TALKIN' PRETTY TIGHT, TOMMY. ANYTHING YOU'D CARE TO SHARE?



HE THOUGHT YOU WERE MY TROPHIES.

YOU SHOULD BOTH BE FLATTERED-- THAT'S QUITE A COMPLIMENT.



IT DON'T BOTHER YOU, BEIN' CONSIDERED ESSENTIALLY CHATTEL?



I DON'T KNOW. CAN YOU MISS WHAT YOU NEVER HAD, OR YEARN FOR SOMETHING THAT HAS NO MEANING?

I'M HAPPY, I'M FULFILLED, I LIVE A GOOD LIFE. CLICHÉ AS IT MAY BE, THERE ARE WORSE FATES.



DANCING THE *CIRCUIT*, FOR EXAMPLE.

WHAT IS THAT, TOMAS--THE *CIRCUIT*, I MEAN? WILLEM MENTIONED IT BEFORE.



YEAH, HE DID, DIDN'T HE?

IT'S A RUMOR YOU HEAR FROM TIME TO TIME AMONG THE OUT-WORLD SYSTEMS-- ALMOST AS SCARY A BOGEYMAN AS THE *ALIENS*.

THEN, THEY SELL 'EM.



SUPPOSED TO BE A SLAVER NETWORK. FLESH PEDDLERS GRAB LIKELY PROSPECTS, WIPE THEIR MEMORIES, USE BEHAVIOR MOD TO RECONFIGURE THEIR PERSONALITIES.



WE SAY "RUMOR" BECAUSE NO ONE'S EVER MANAGED TO PROVE ITS EXISTENCE.

THERE ARE ALWAYS THE OCCASIONAL ATTEMPTS-- BY COPS OR JOURNALISTS. NOTHING EVER COMES OF 'EM. SOME FOLKS GIVE UP IN FRUSTRATION. OTHERS SIMPLY...

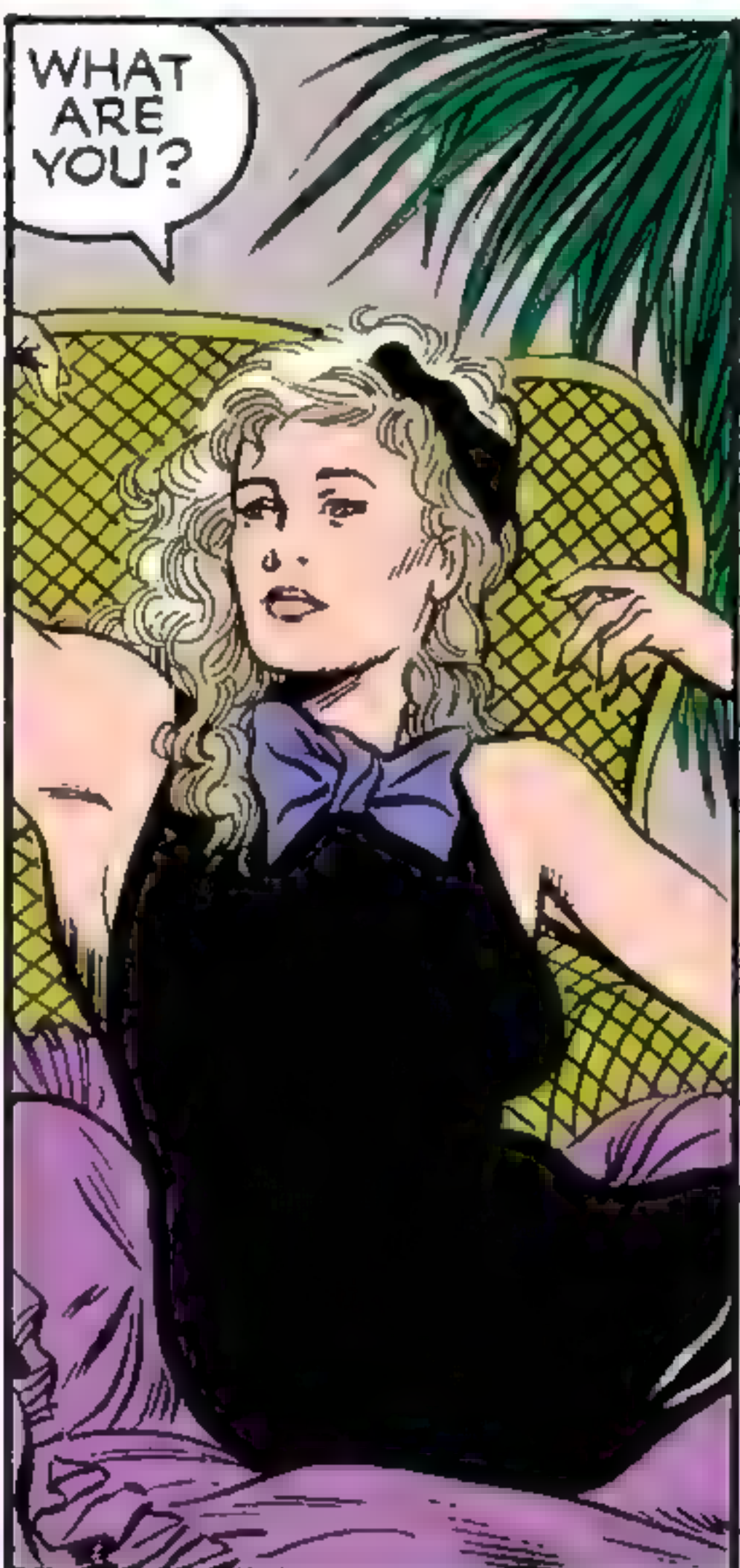
... DISAPPEAR.



HAVE YOU EVER LOOKED?



WE'RE NOT COPS. OR JOURNALISTS.



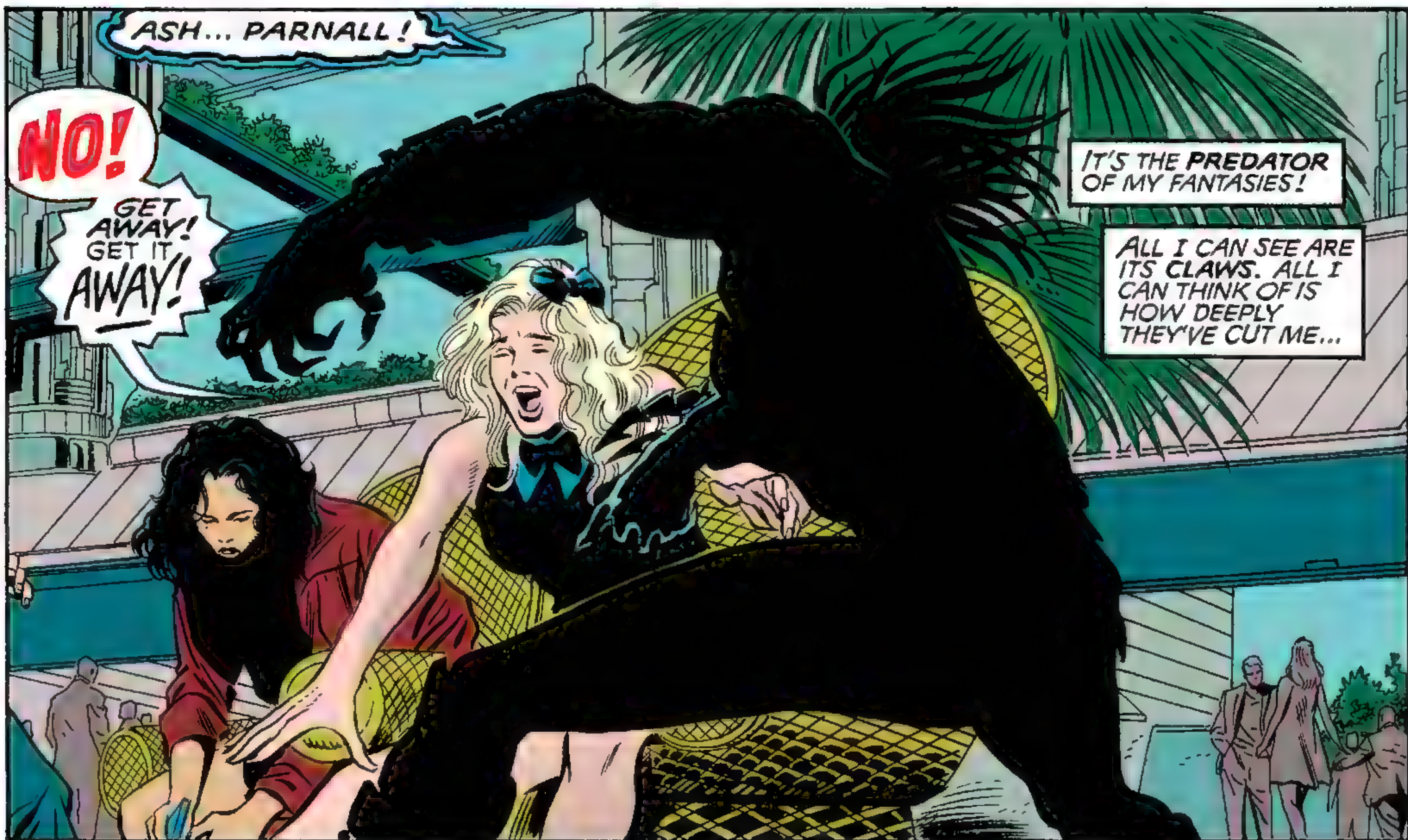
WHAT ARE YOU?



AT THE MOMENT, YOUR GUESTS.



AND WHO KNOWS, MAYBE-- JUST A LITTLE-- *FRIENDS*.



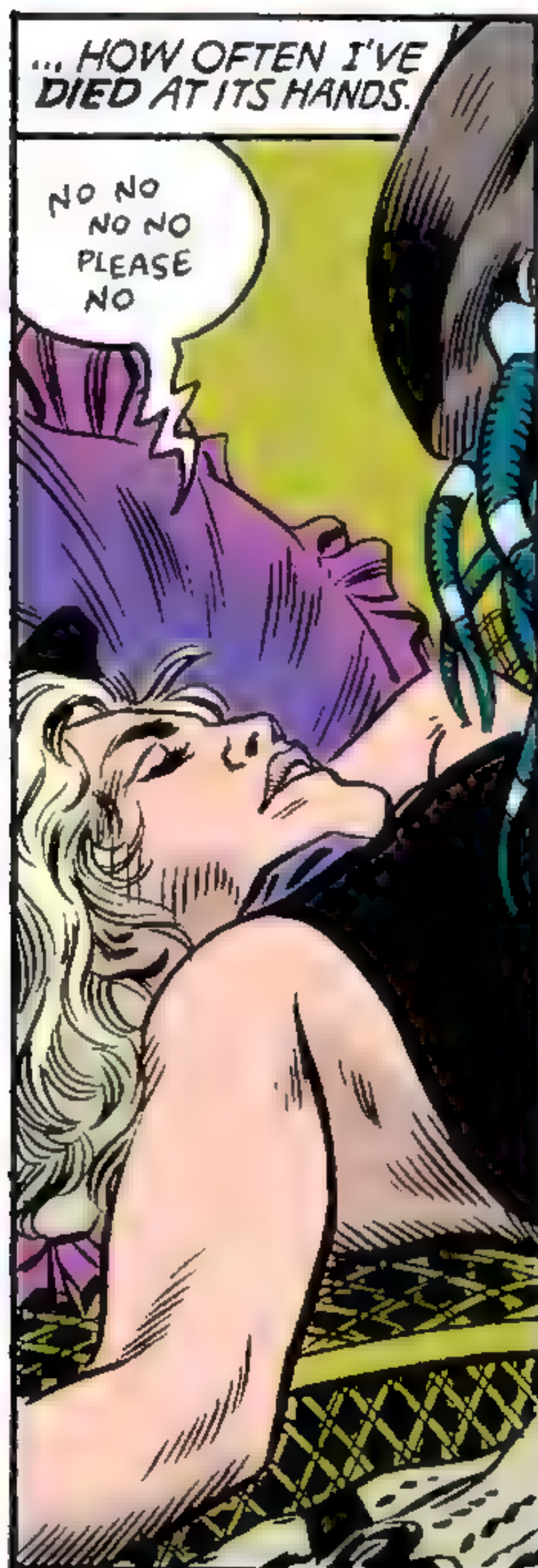
ASH... PARNALL!

NO!

GET AWAY!
GET IT AWAY!

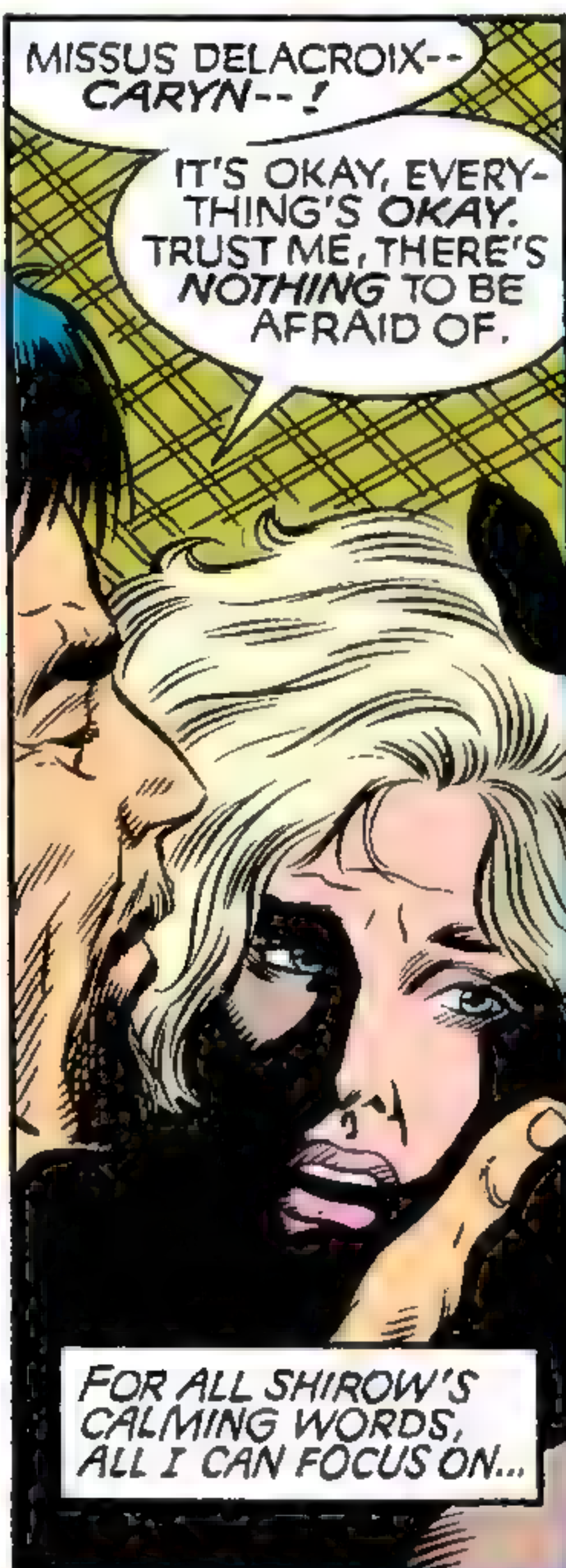
IT'S THE PREDATOR OF MY FANTASIES!

ALL I CAN SEE ARE ITS CLAWS. ALL I CAN THINK OF IS HOW DEEPLY THEY'VE CUT ME...



... HOW OFTEN I'VE DIED AT ITS HANDS.

NO NO NO NO PLEASE NO



MISSUS DELACROIX-- CARYN--!

IT'S OKAY, EVERYTHING'S OKAY. TRUST ME, THERE'S NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF.

FOR ALL SHIROW'S CALMING WORDS, ALL I CAN FOCUS ON...



... IS THE MEMORY FROM A DREAM OF THE PREDATOR'S SPEAR STABBING HIM THROUGH THE HEART.

THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE ABOUT THAT MOMENT, TO DO WITH ME, AN IMAGE HARDER TO HOLD THAN QUICK-SILVER...

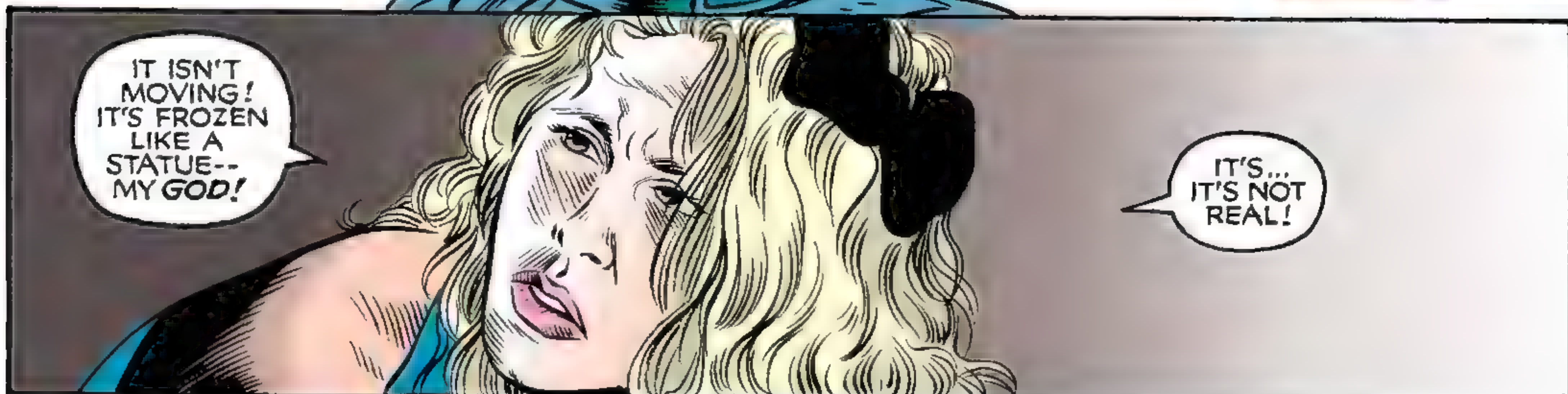
...THAT SLIPS THROUGH MY MENTAL FINGERS AS I REALIZE...



WE'RE NOT DEAD-- WHY AREN'T WE DEAD?!

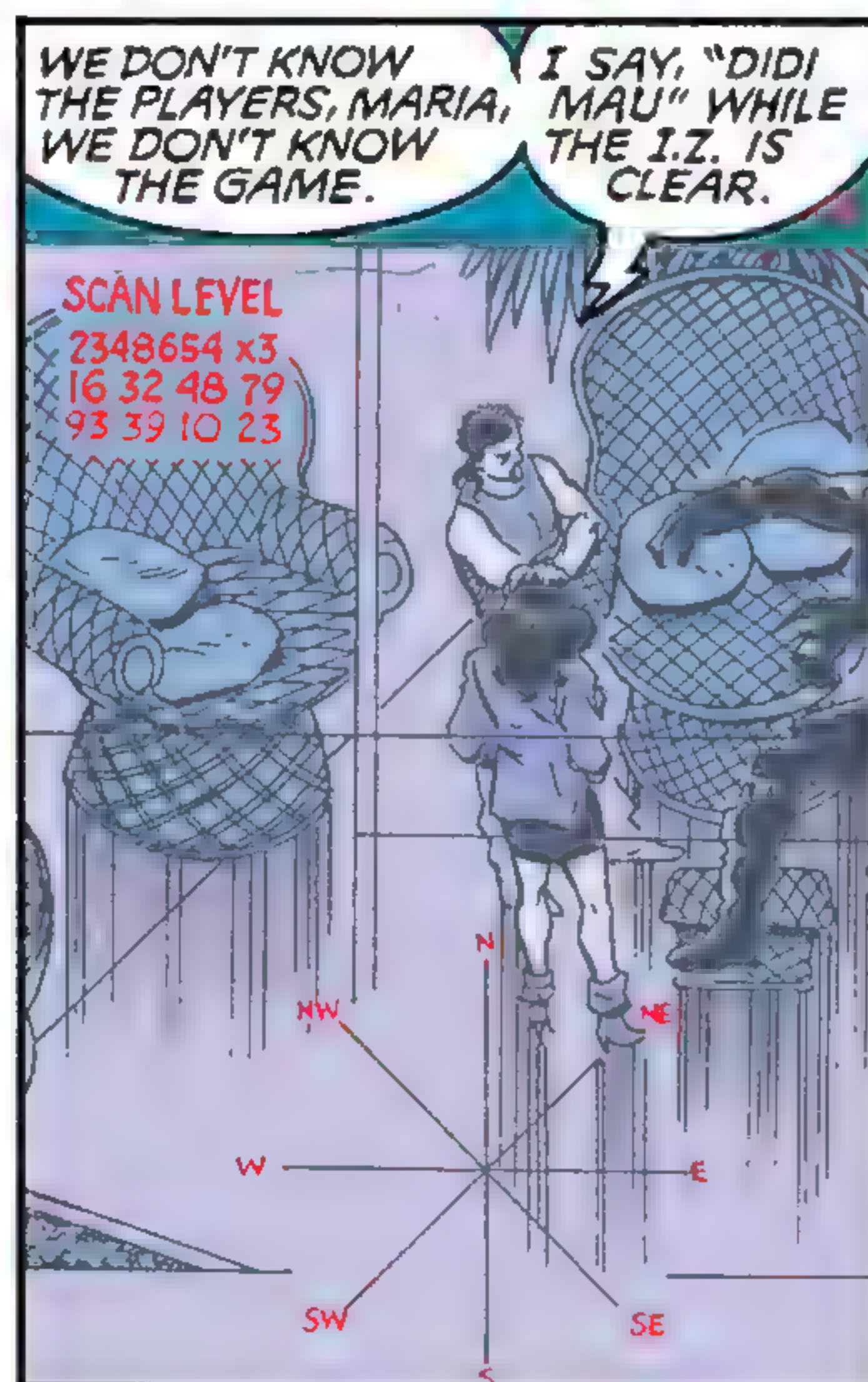
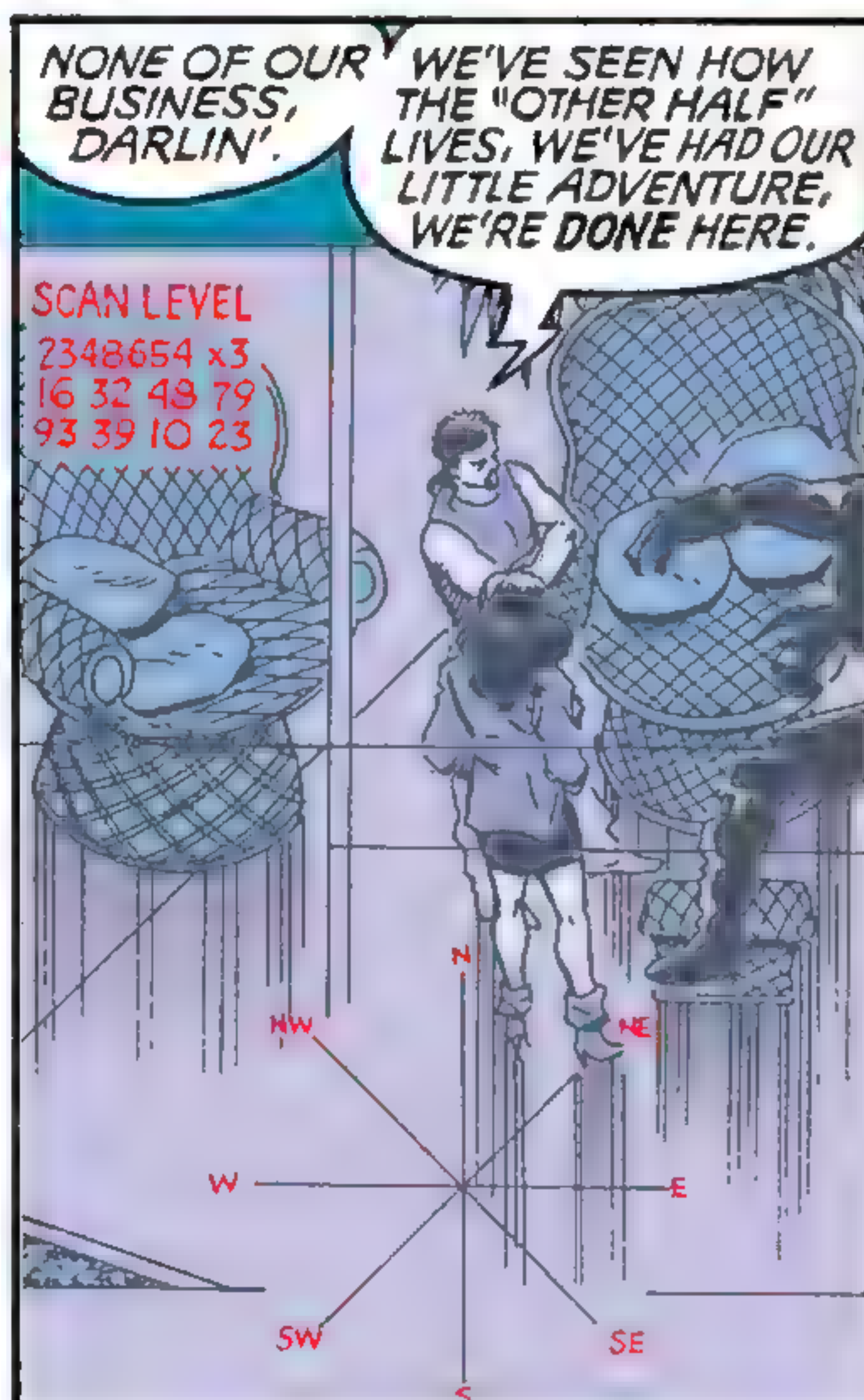
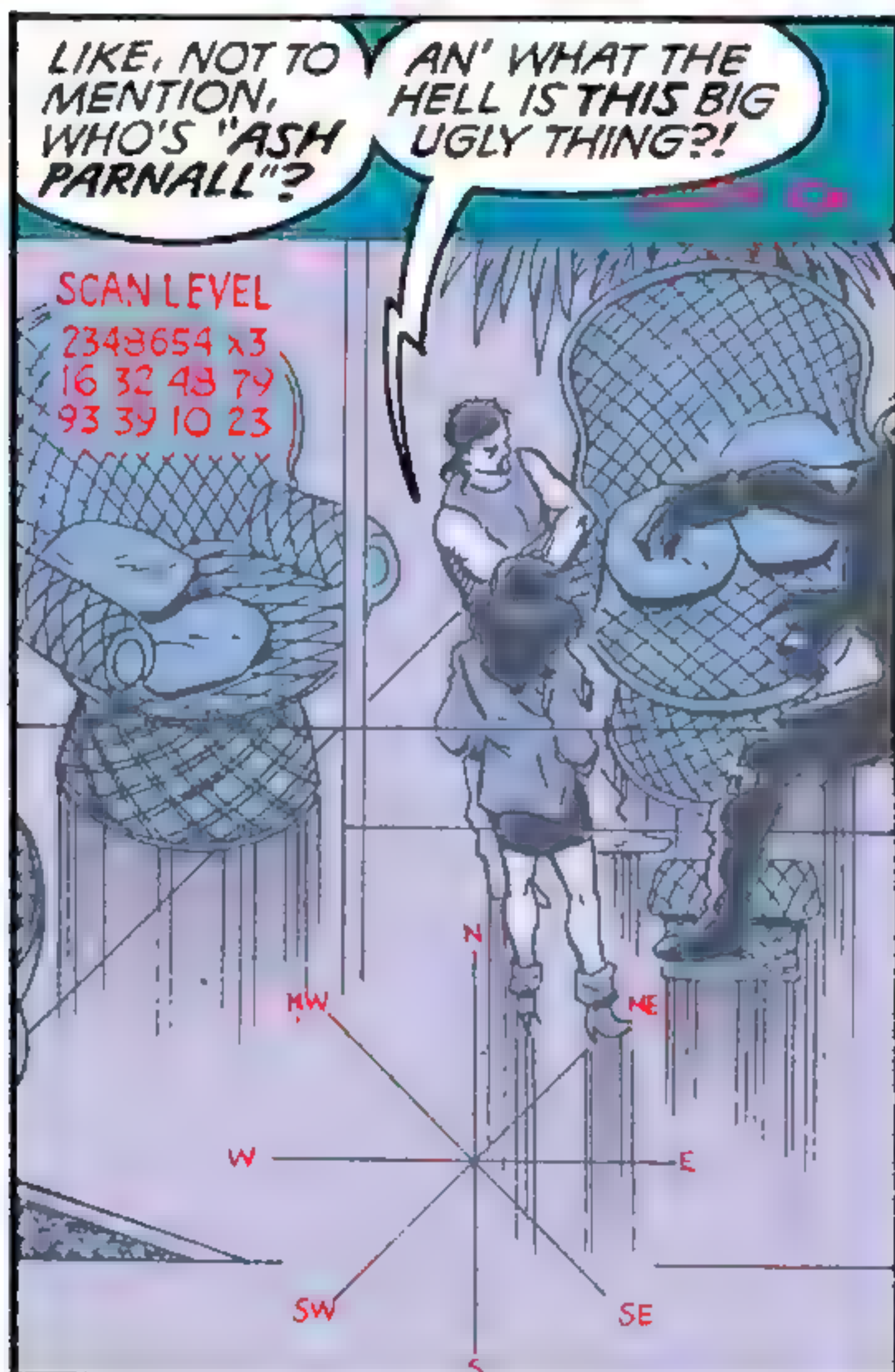
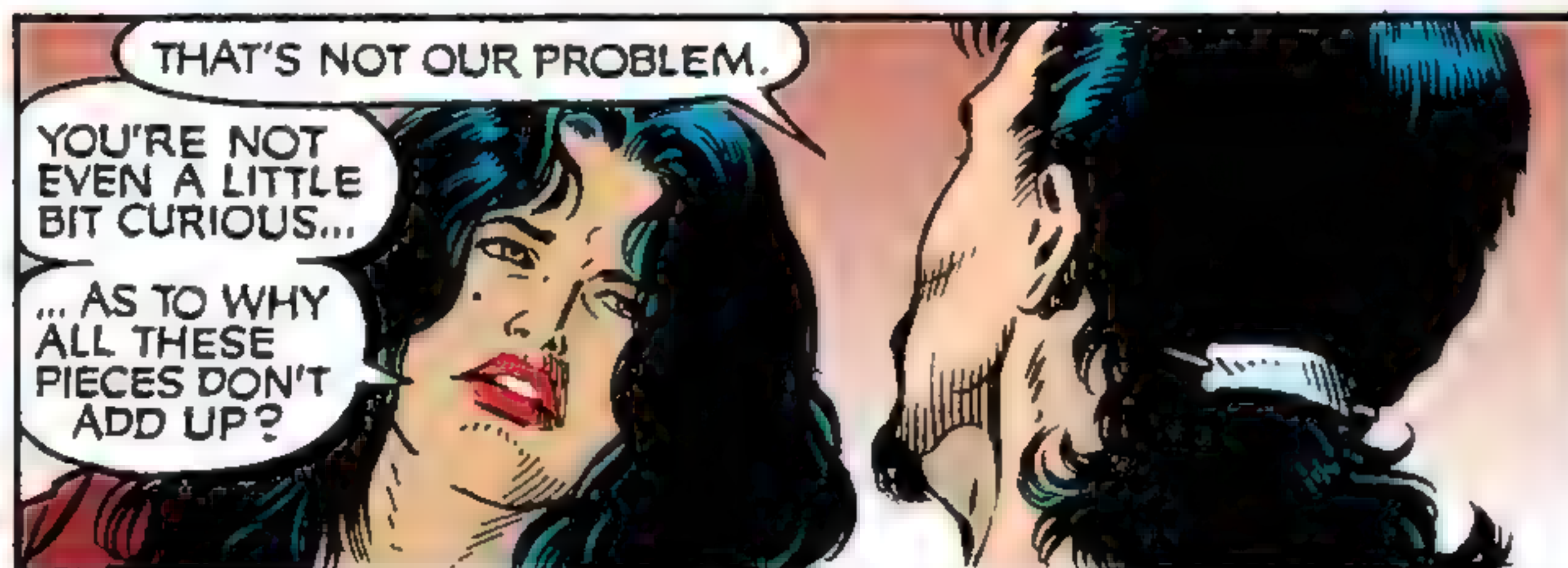
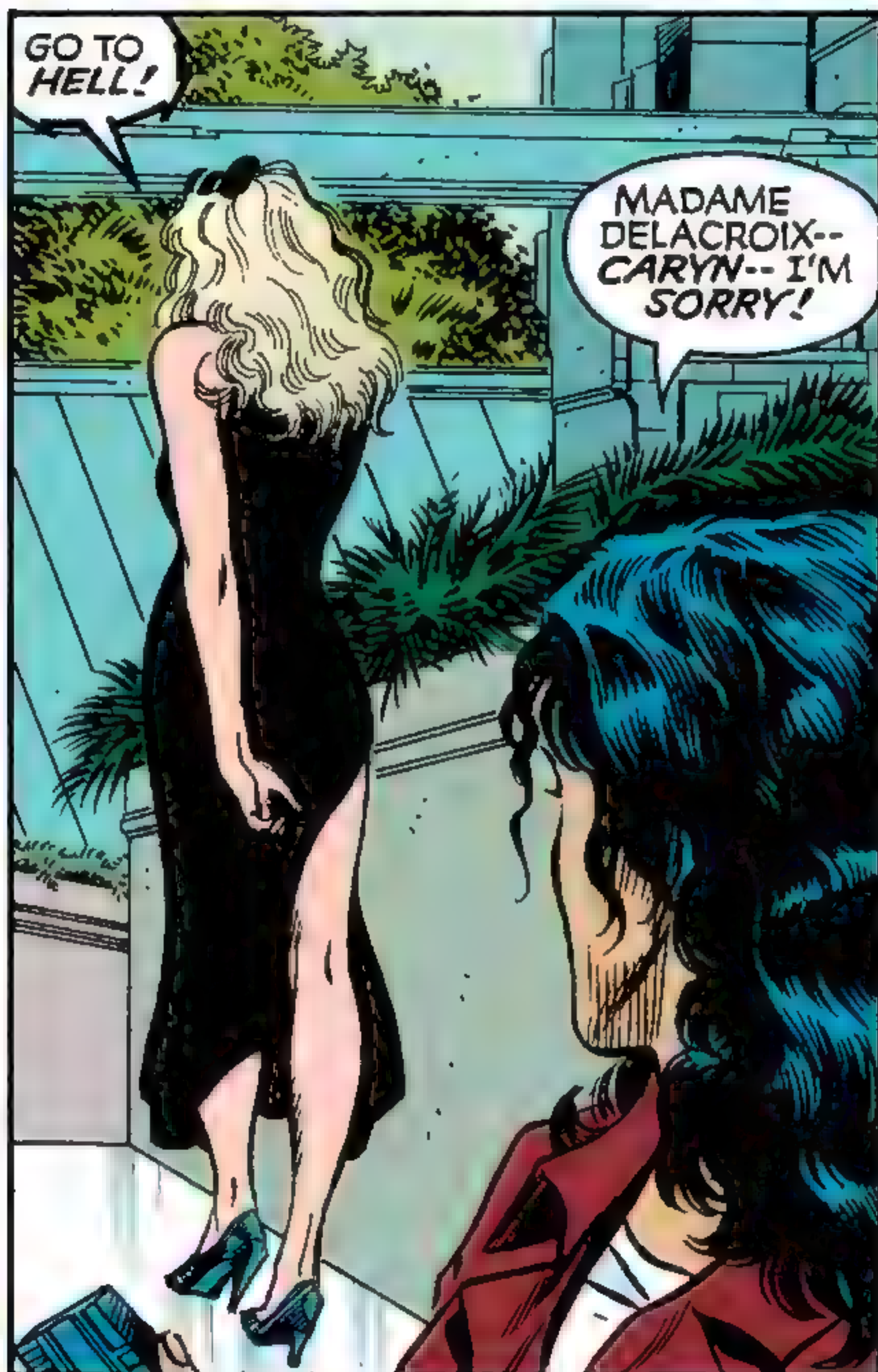
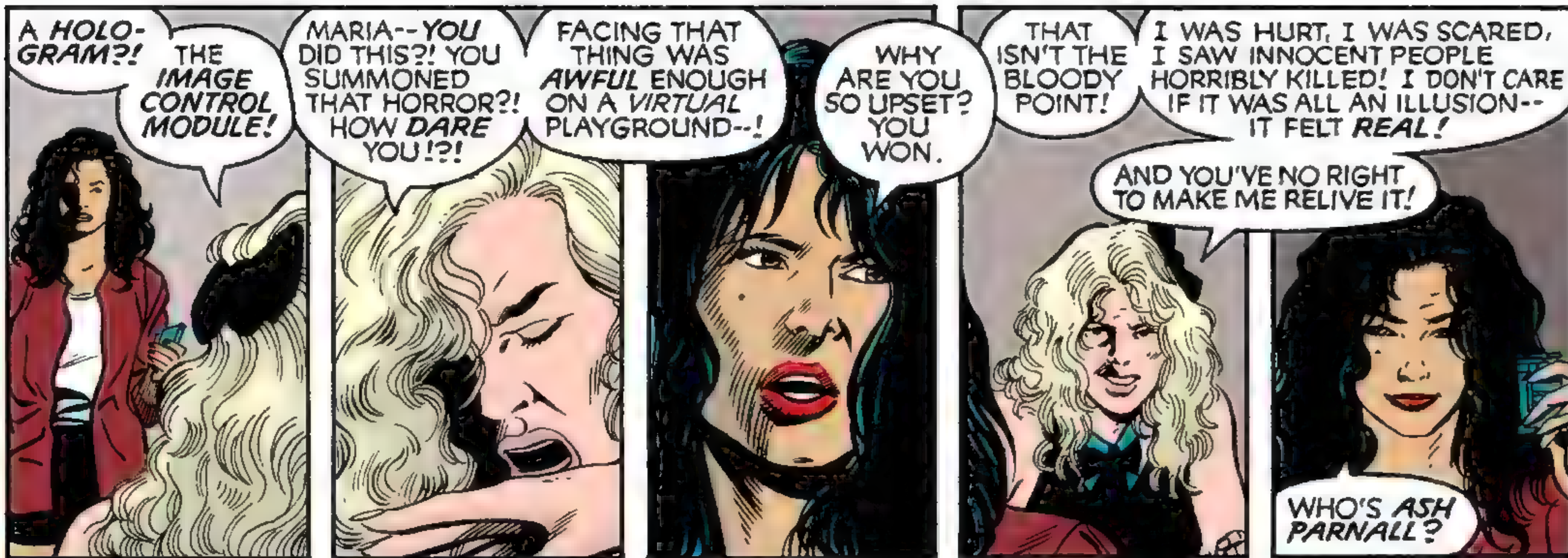
WHY HASN'T IT ATTACKED?

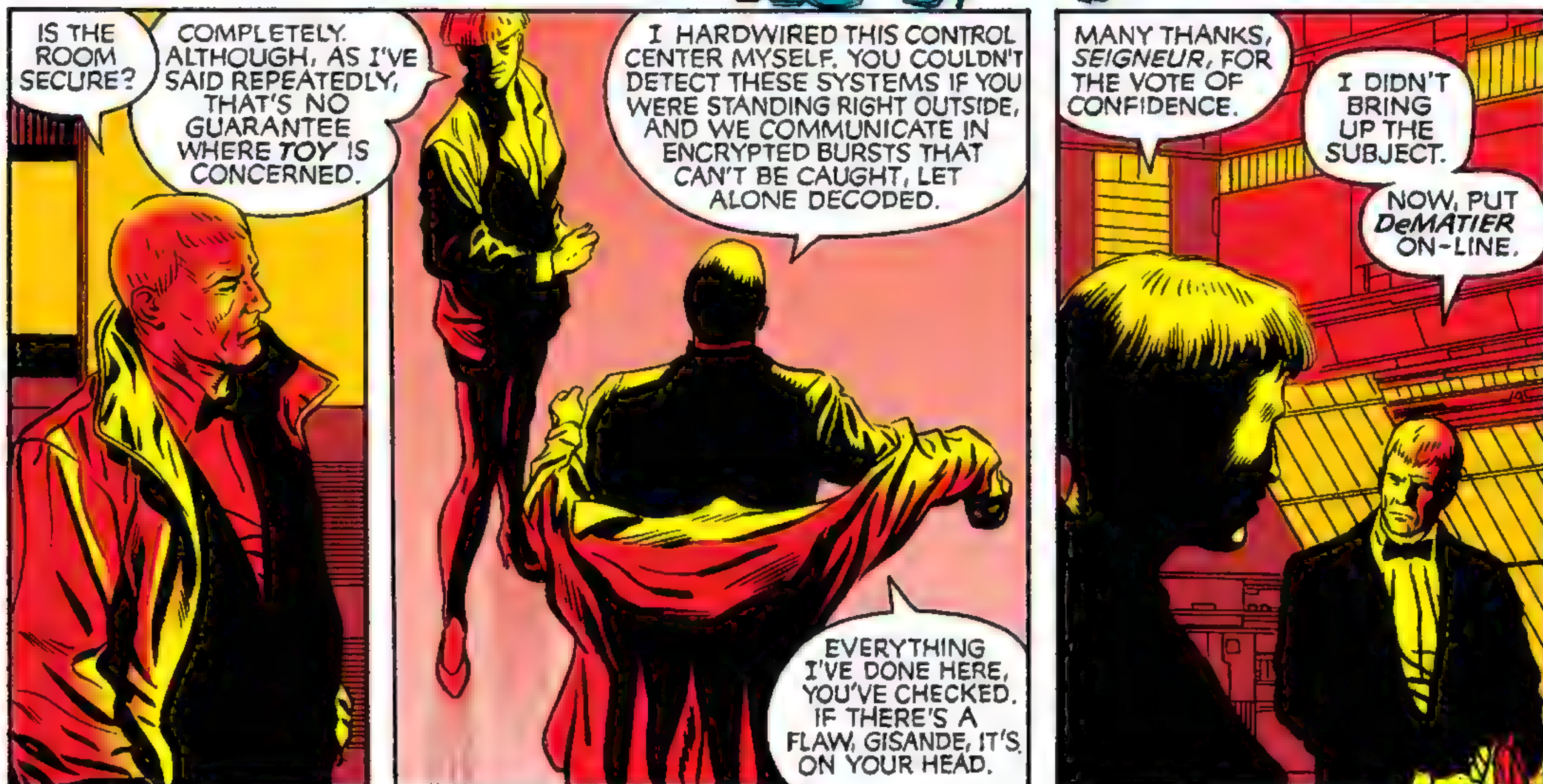
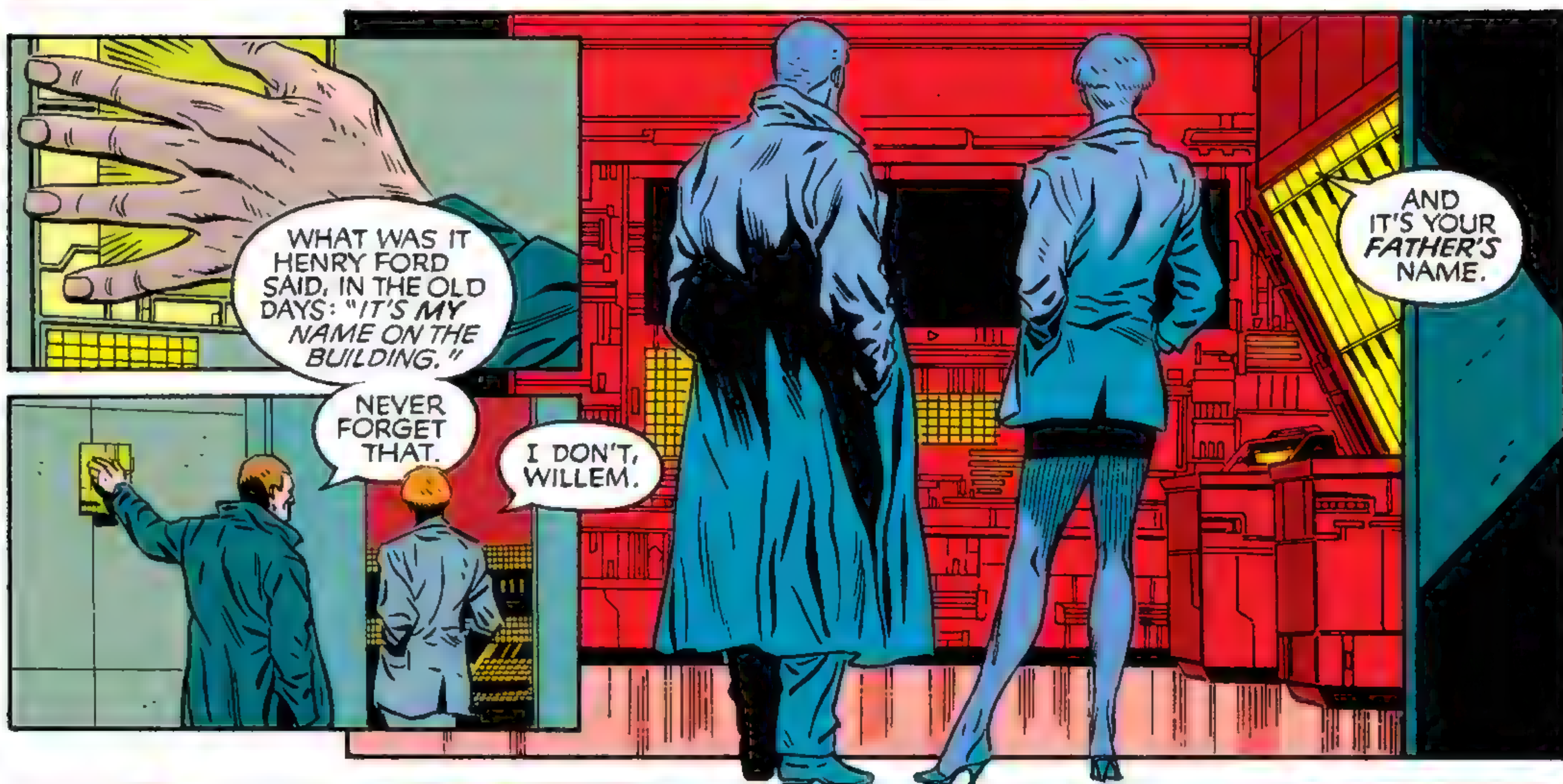
IT CAN'T.

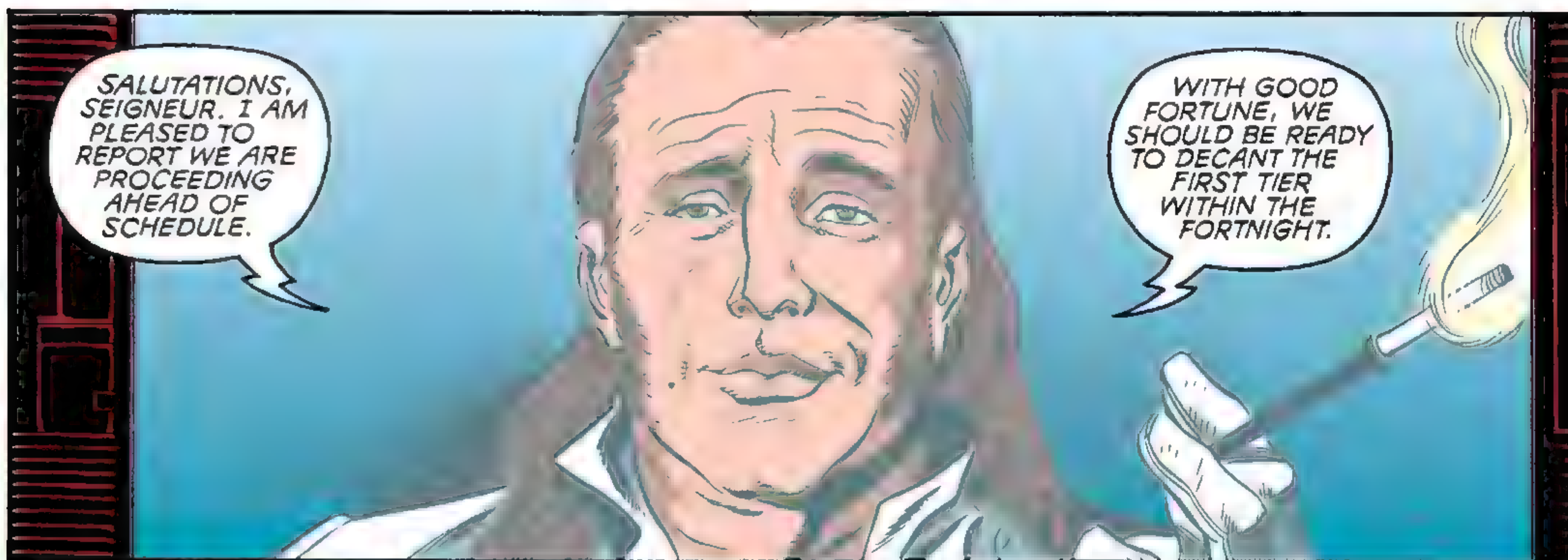


IT ISN'T MOVING! IT'S FROZEN LIKE A STATUE-- MY GOD!

IT'S... IT'S NOT REAL!

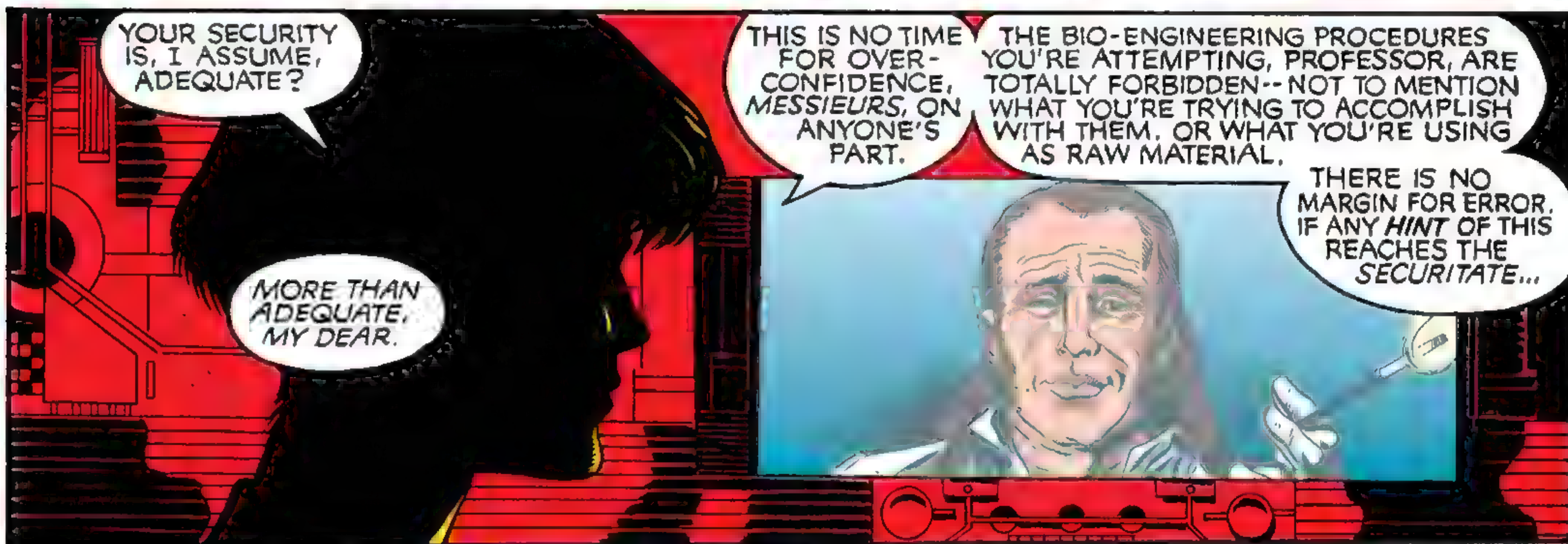






SALUTATIONS, SEIGNEUR. I AM PLEASED TO REPORT WE ARE PROCEEDING AHEAD OF SCHEDULE.

WITH GOOD FORTUNE, WE SHOULD BE READY TO DECANT THE FIRST TIER WITHIN THE FORTNIGHT.



YOUR SECURITY IS, I ASSUME, ADEQUATE?

MORE THAN ADEQUATE, MY DEAR.

THIS IS NO TIME FOR OVER-CONFIDENCE, MESSIEURS, ON ANYONE'S PART.

THE BIO-ENGINEERING PROCEDURES YOU'RE ATTEMPTING, PROFESSOR, ARE TOTALLY FORBIDDEN-- NOT TO MENTION WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH WITH THEM. OR WHAT YOU'RE USING AS RAW MATERIAL.

THERE IS NO MARGIN FOR ERROR. IF ANY HINT OF THIS REACHES THE SECURITATE...



THERE HAS BEEN NO ERROR, MY DEAR, OF THAT YOU HAVE MY ABSOLUTE ASSURANCE.

blip TRANSMISSION CLOSED.

HE'S HIDING SOMETHING.

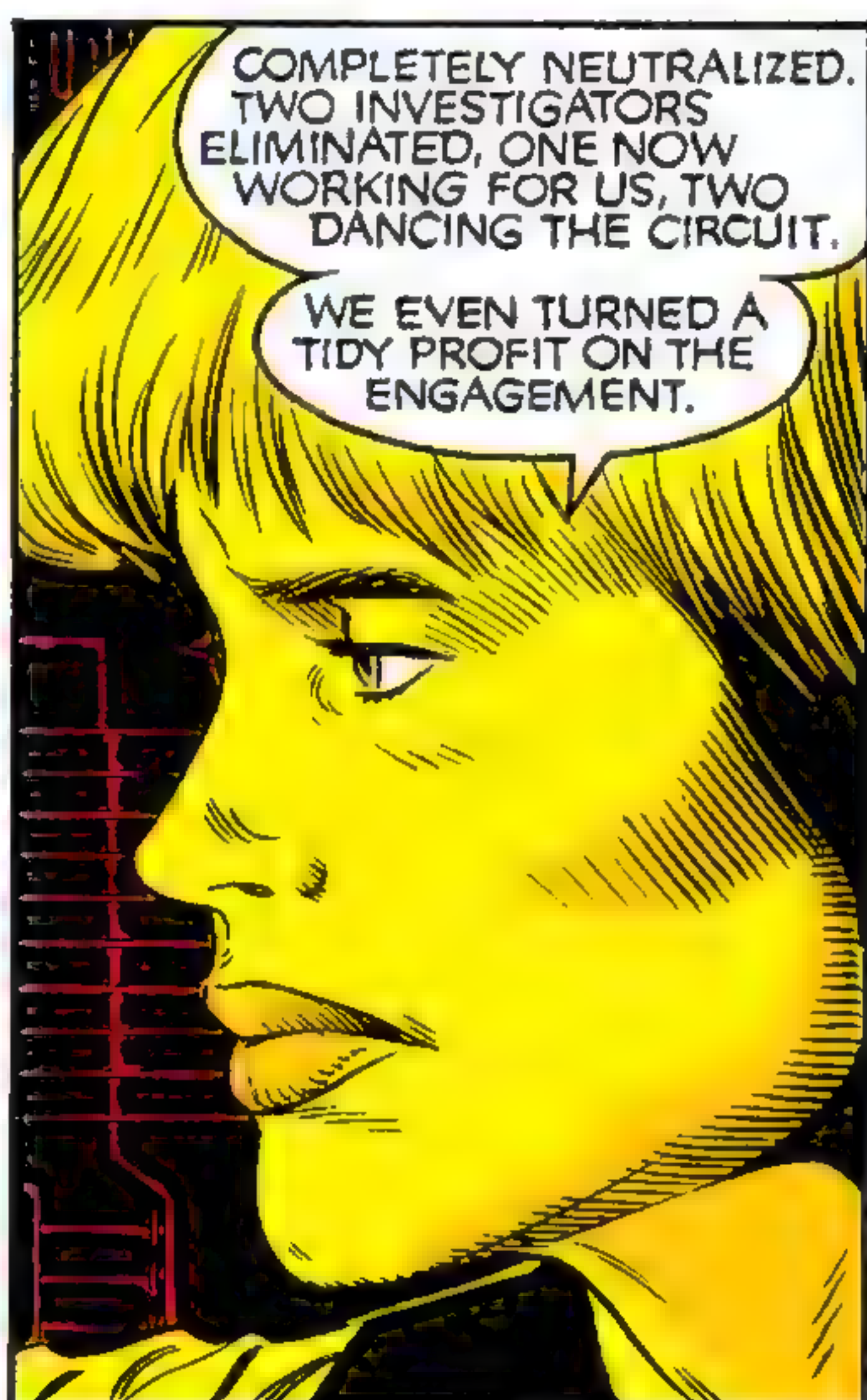
SOMETHING ELSE FOR YOU TO DETERMINE, THEN.

IN THE MEANWHILE, LET'S MOVE ALONG TO THE NEXT ORDER OF BUSINESS.



OPEN A SECURE CHANNEL TO THE CIRCUIT. PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENTS TO BEGIN, FOLLOWED BY INVENTORY STATUS AND PENDING ORDERS.

WHAT'S THE STATUS OF THAT POLICE INQUIRY. BY THE WAY?



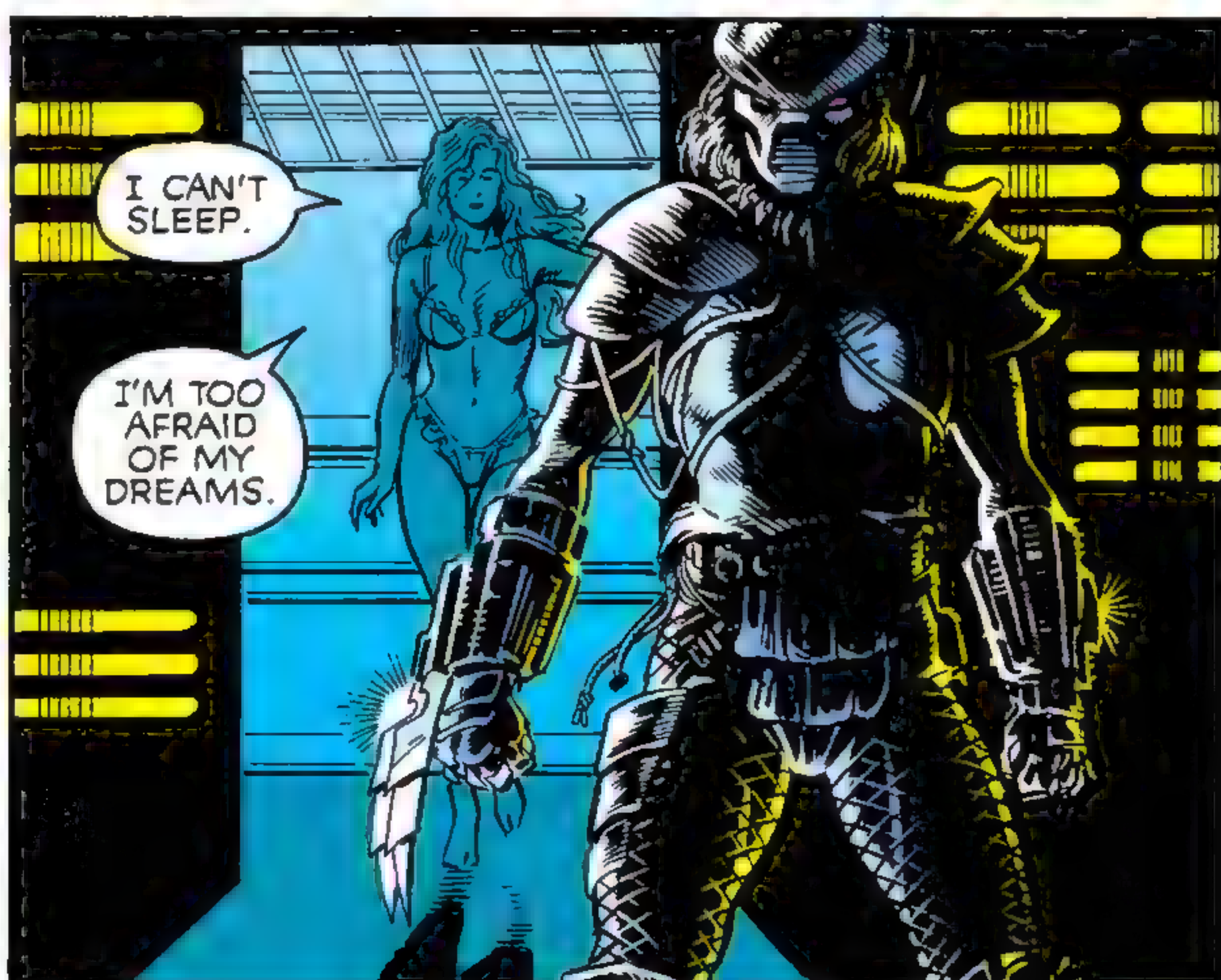
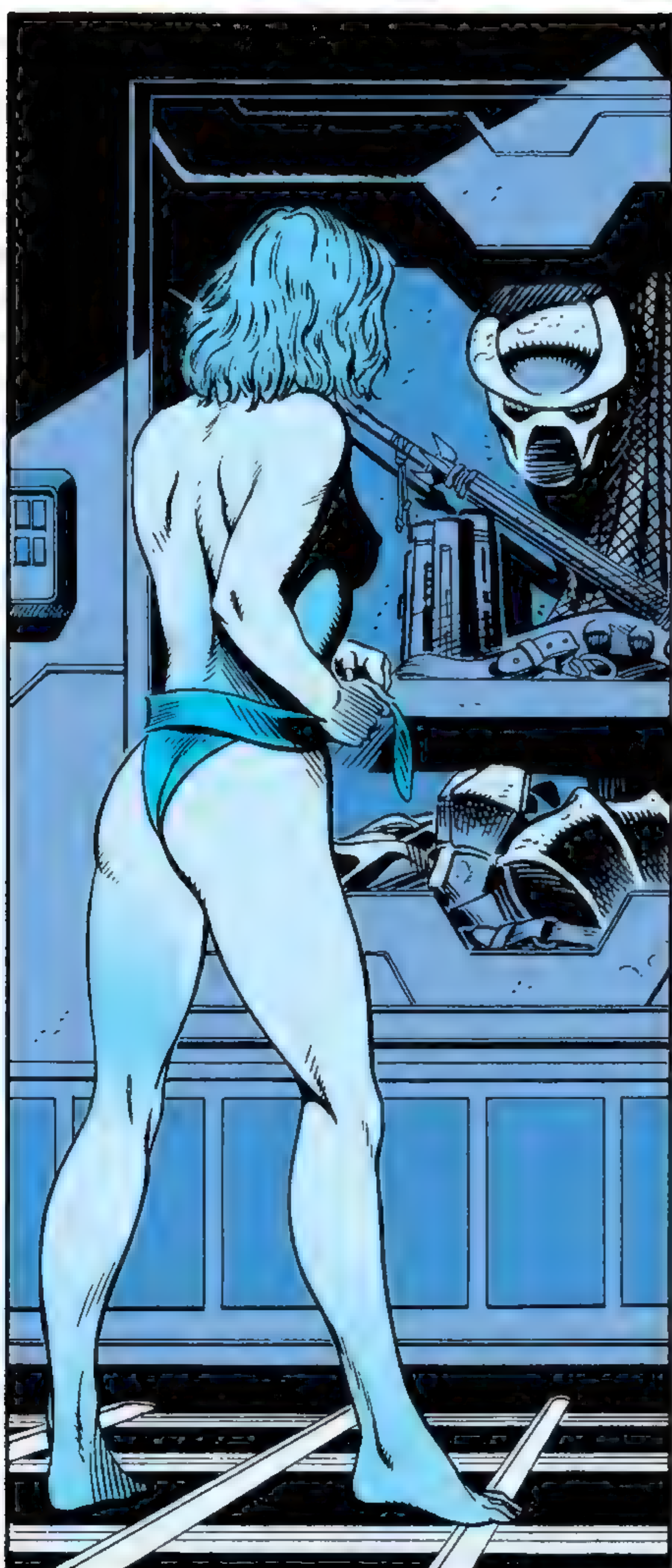
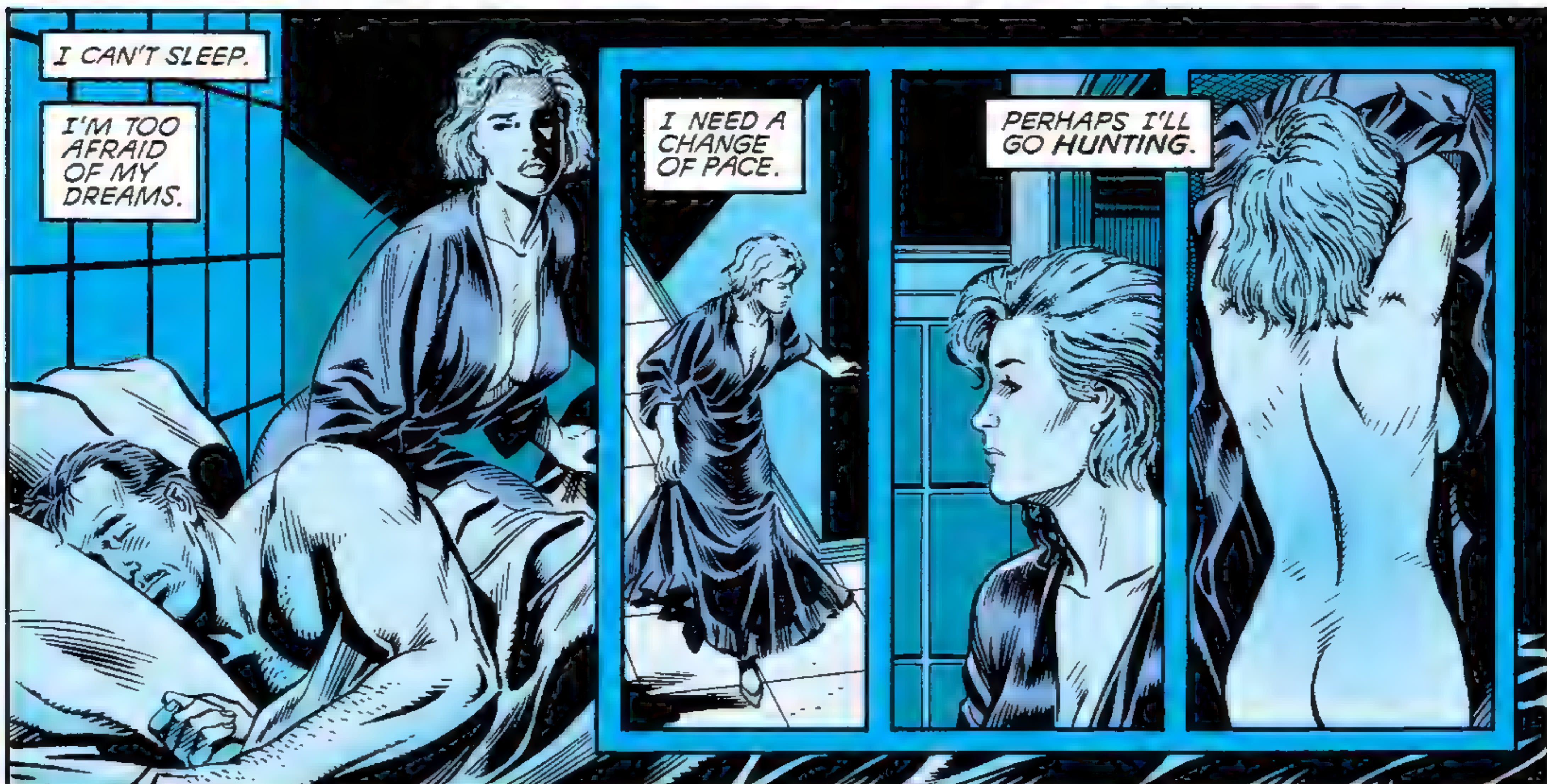
COMPLETELY NEUTRALIZED. TWO INVESTIGATORS ELIMINATED, ONE NOW WORKING FOR US, TWO DANCING THE CIRCUIT.

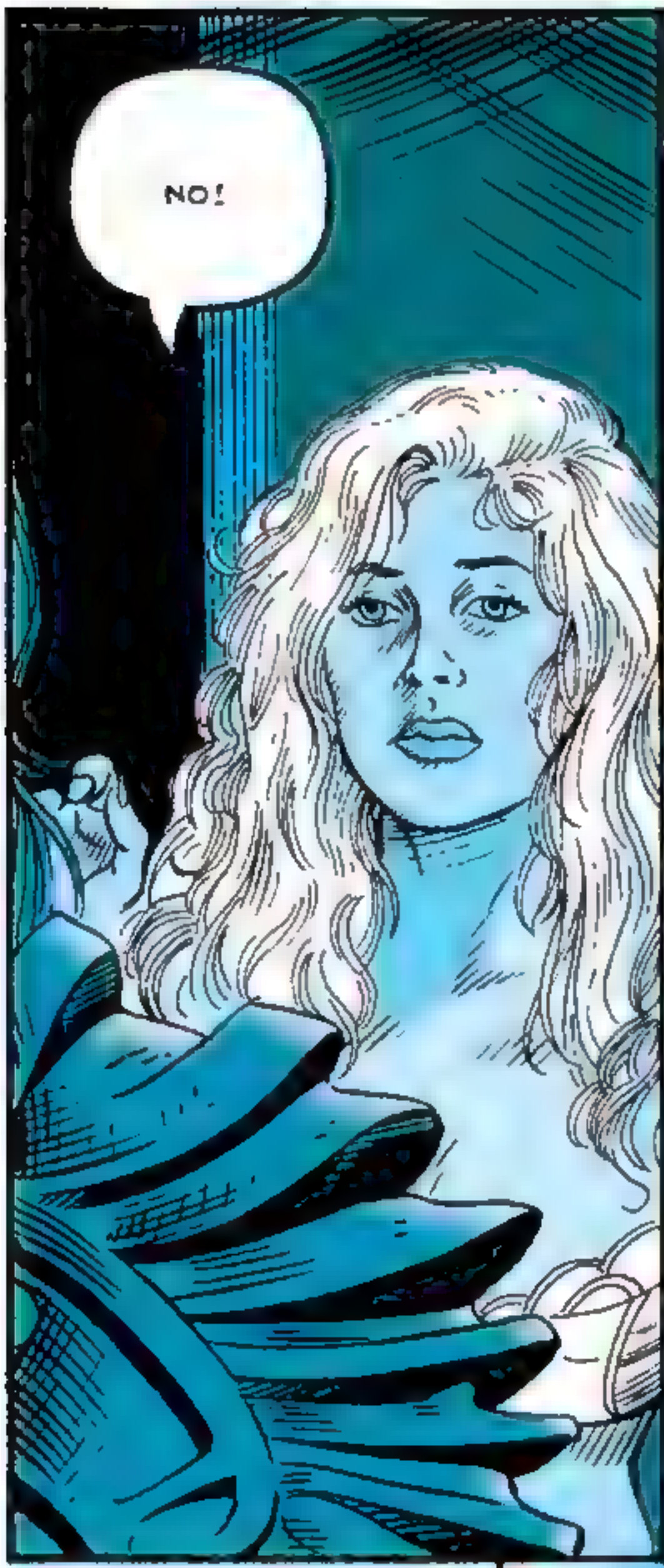
WE EVEN TURNED A TIDY PROFIT ON THE ENGAGEMENT.



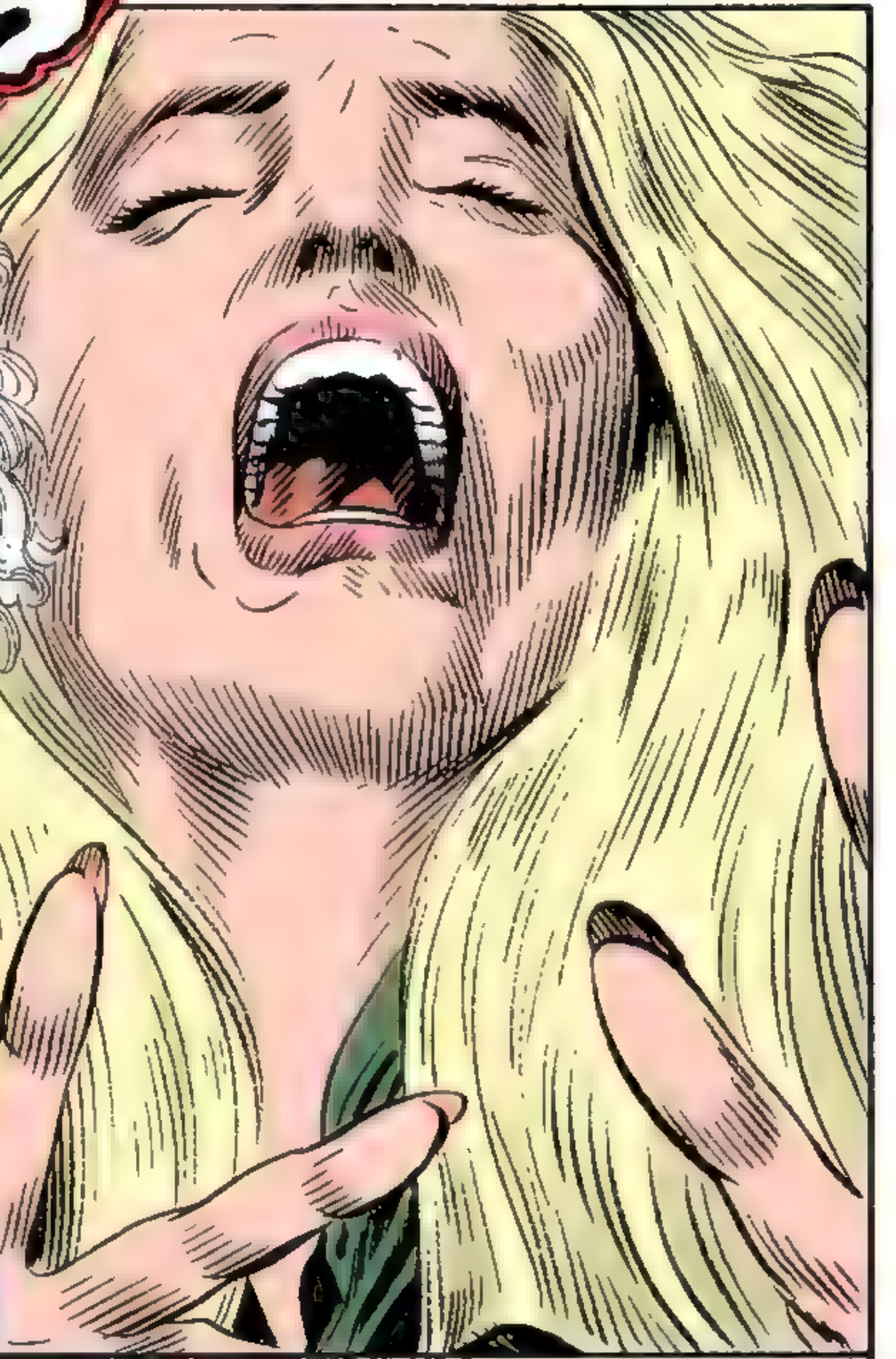
SPLENDID! YOU SHOULD HAVE HAD MORE FAITH IN ME, FATHER. IT WON'T BE LONG NOW BEFORE I'M RUNNING THE CORPORATION...

... AND THERE WON'T BE A BLESSED THING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT!

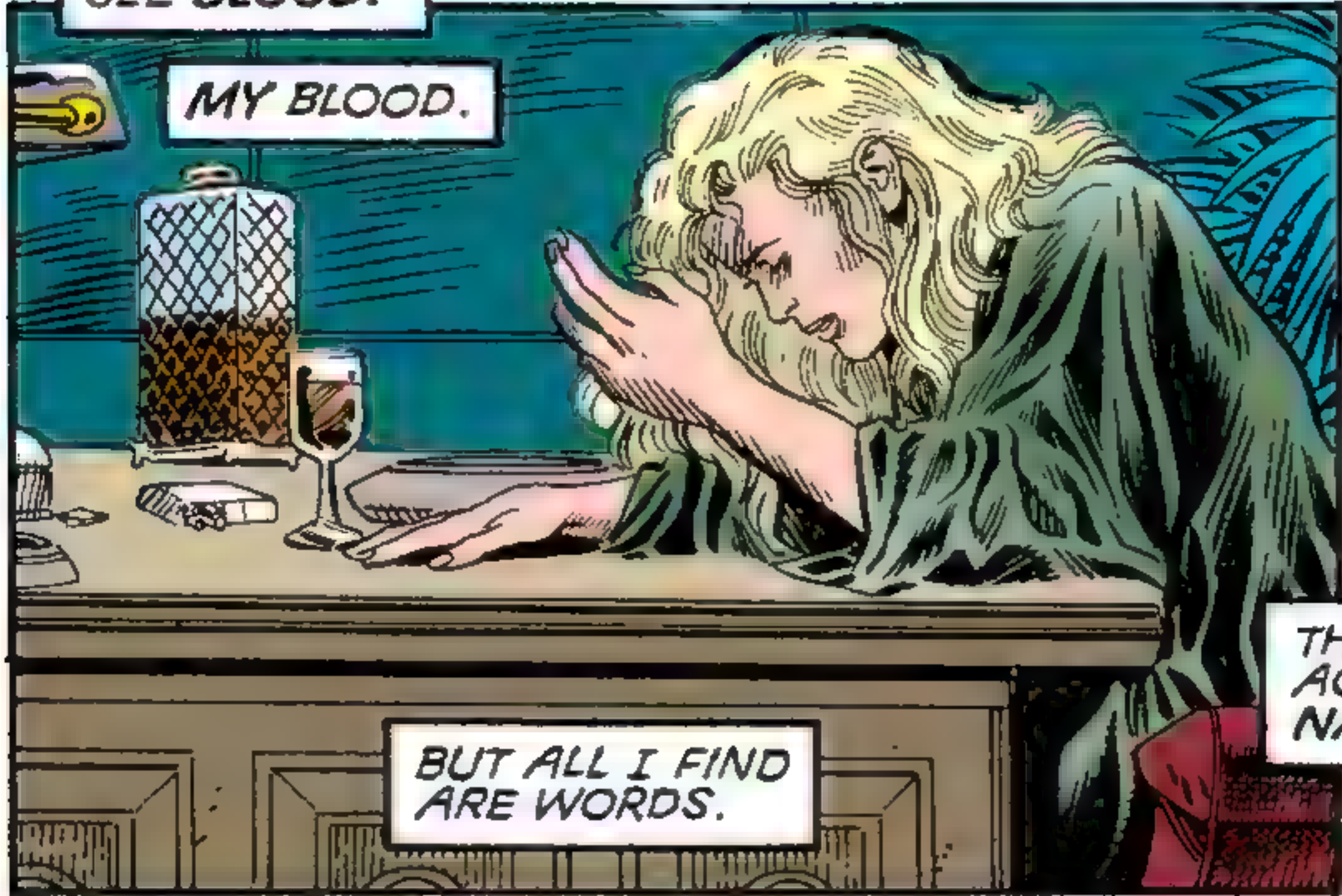




NO!



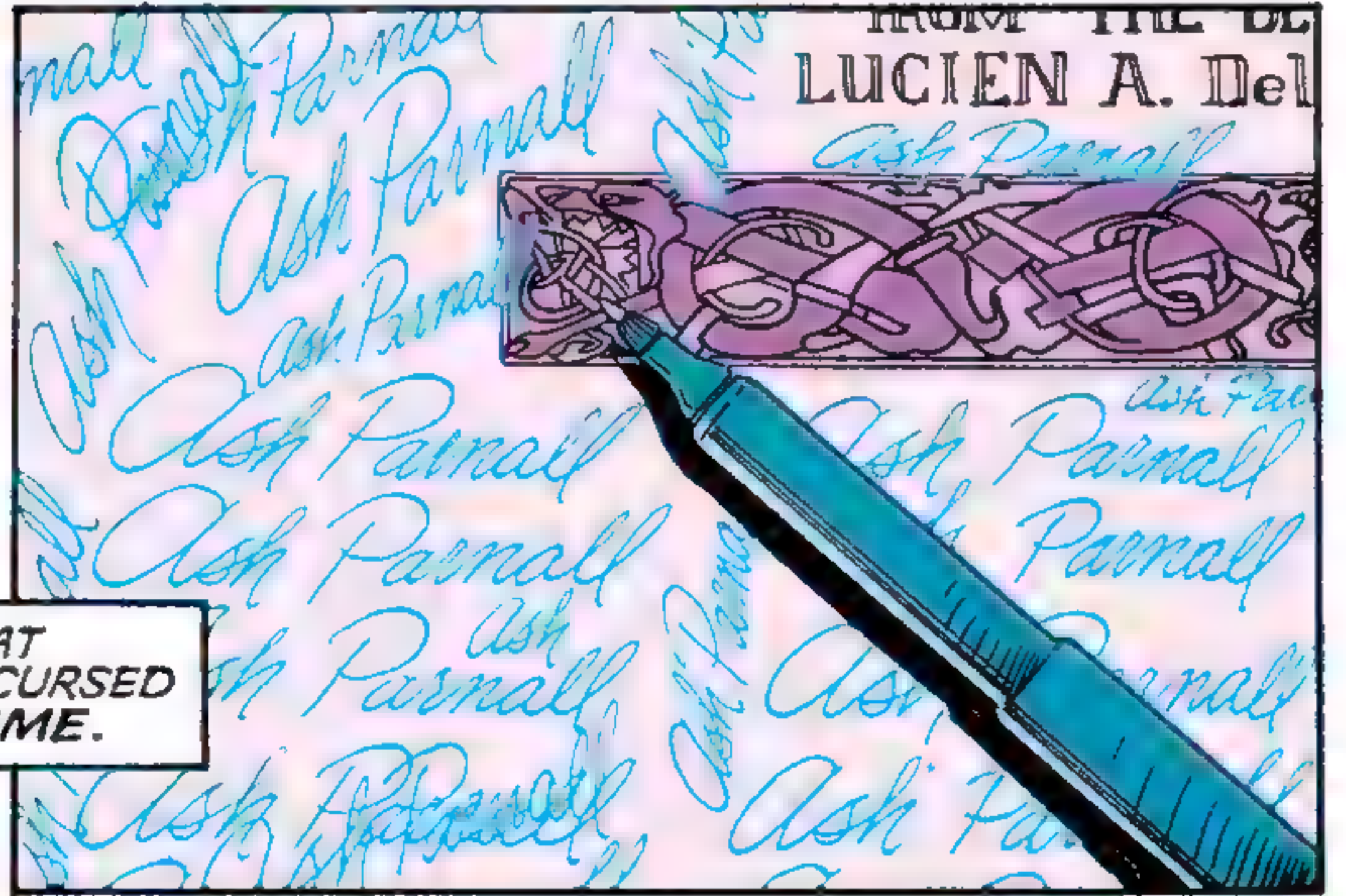
I EXPECT TO
SEE BLOOD.



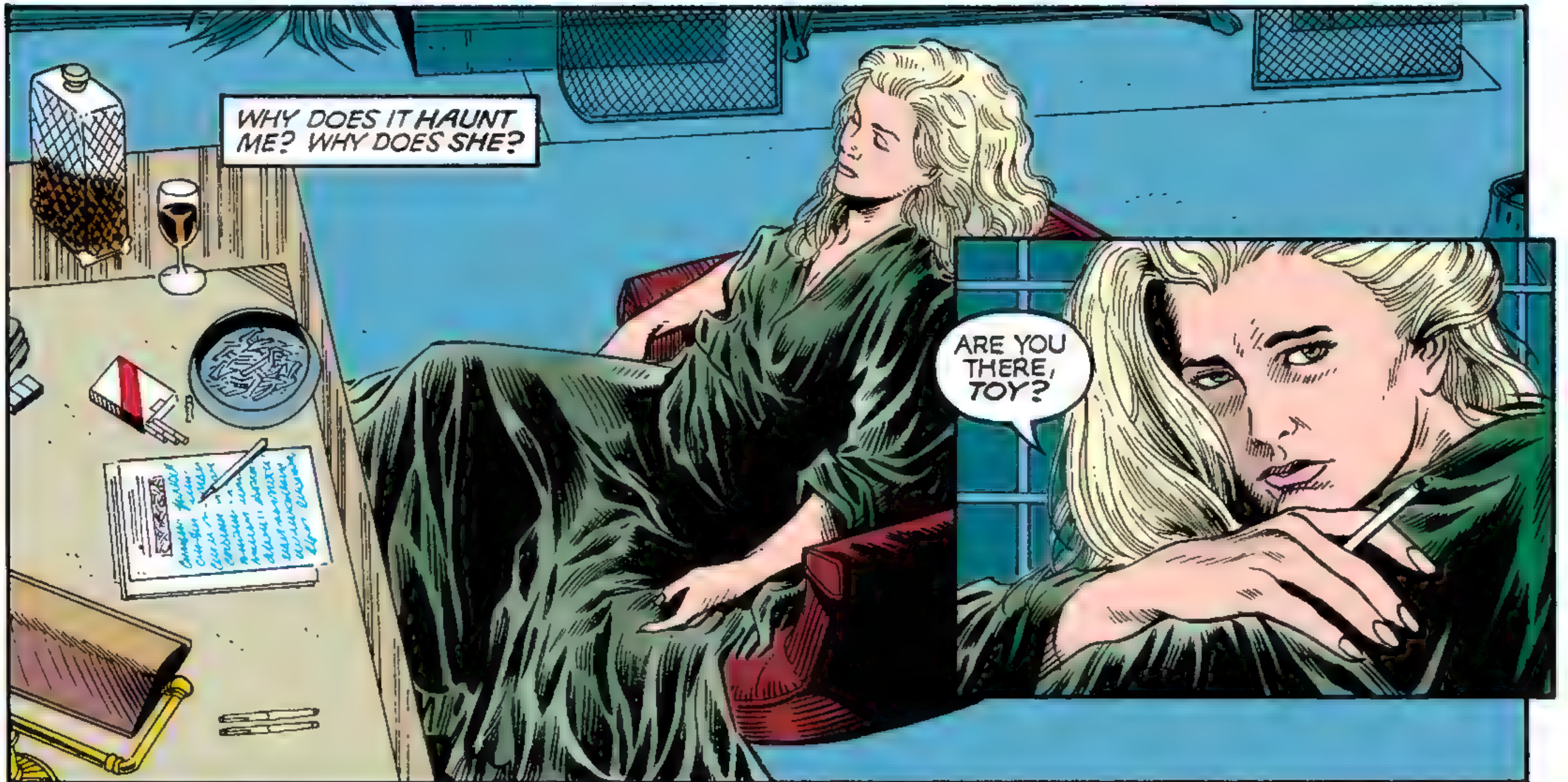
MY BLOOD.

BUT ALL I FIND
ARE WORDS.

THAT
ACCURSED
NAME.

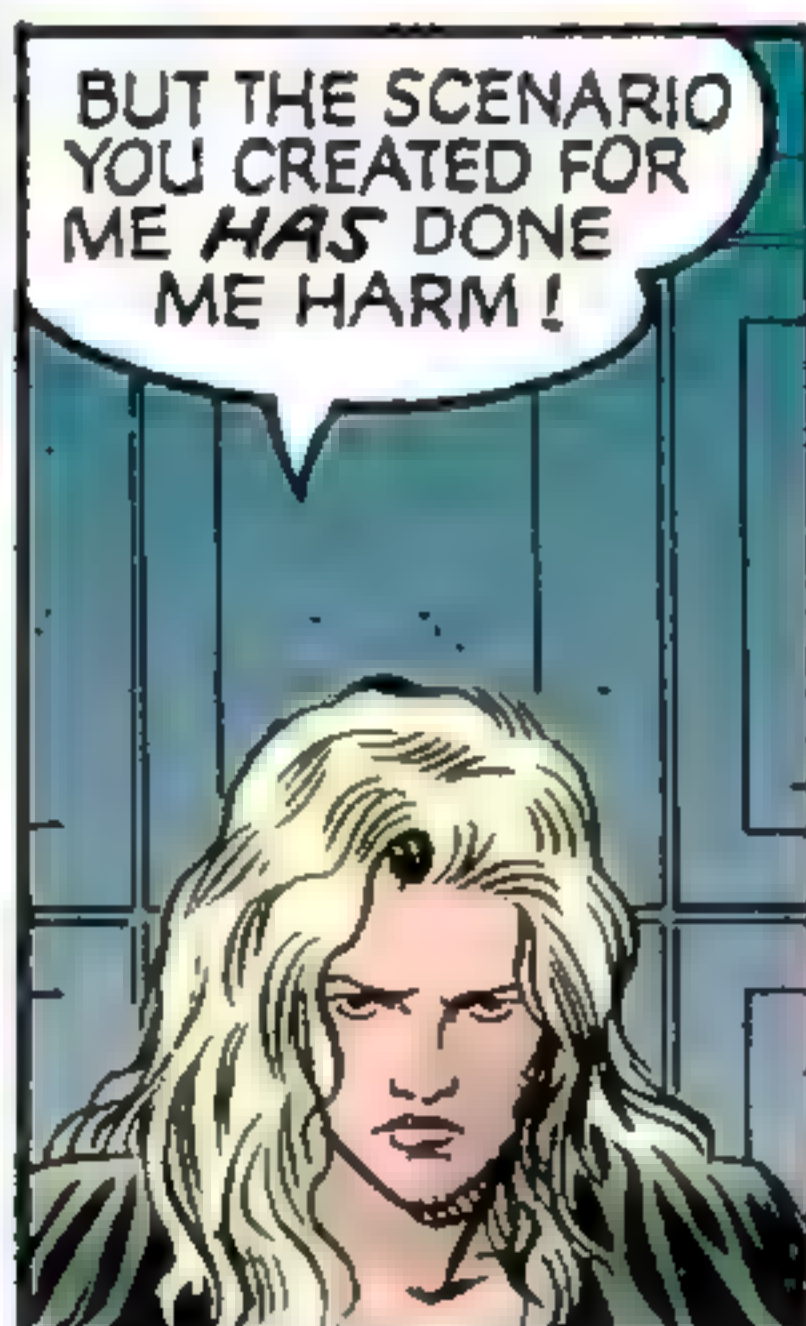
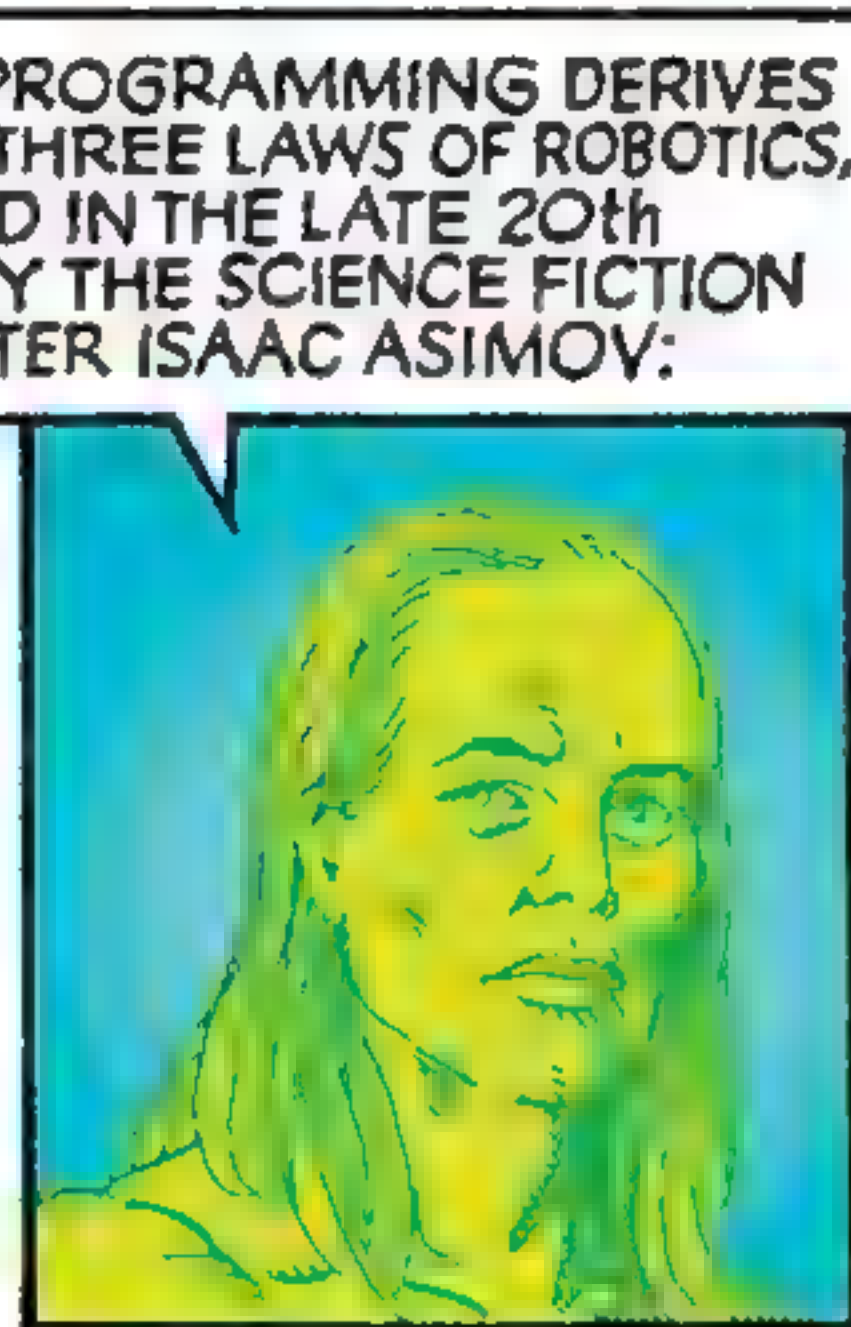
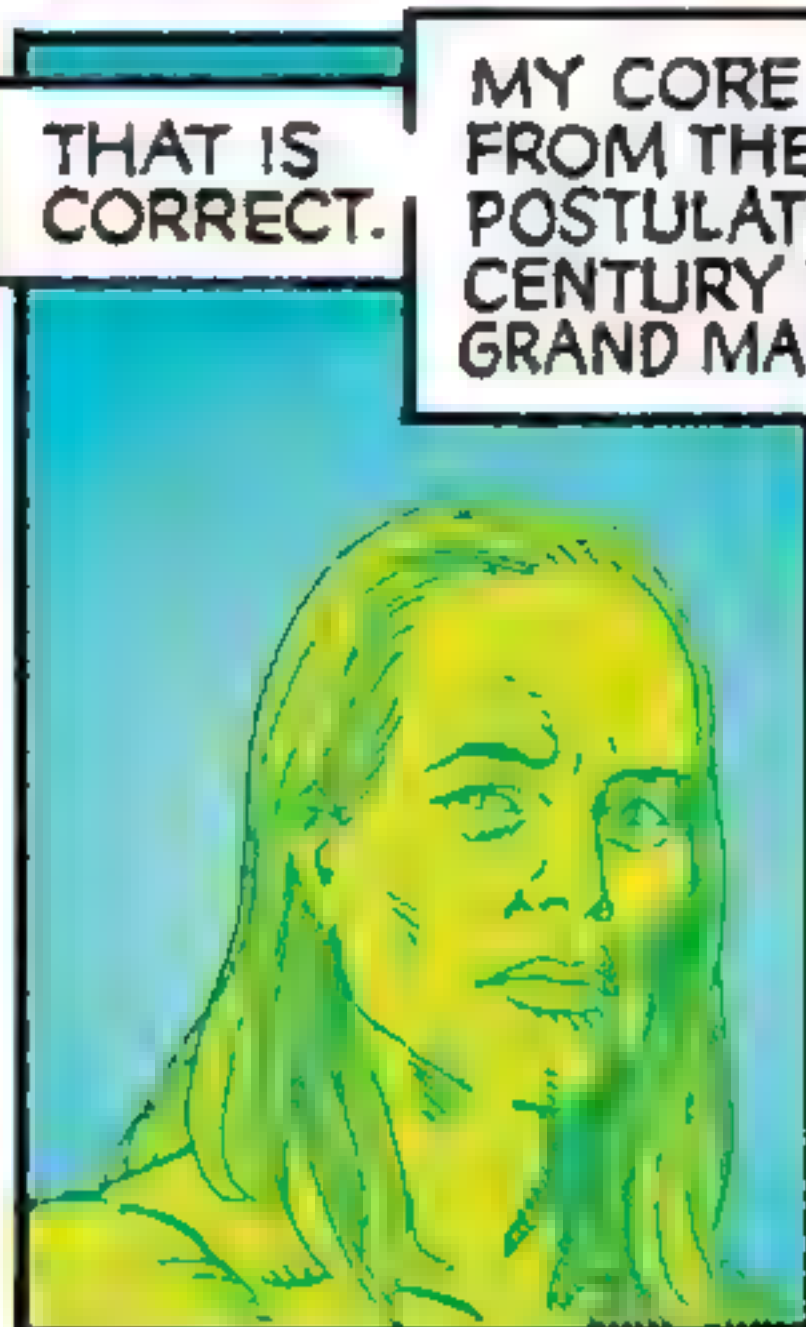
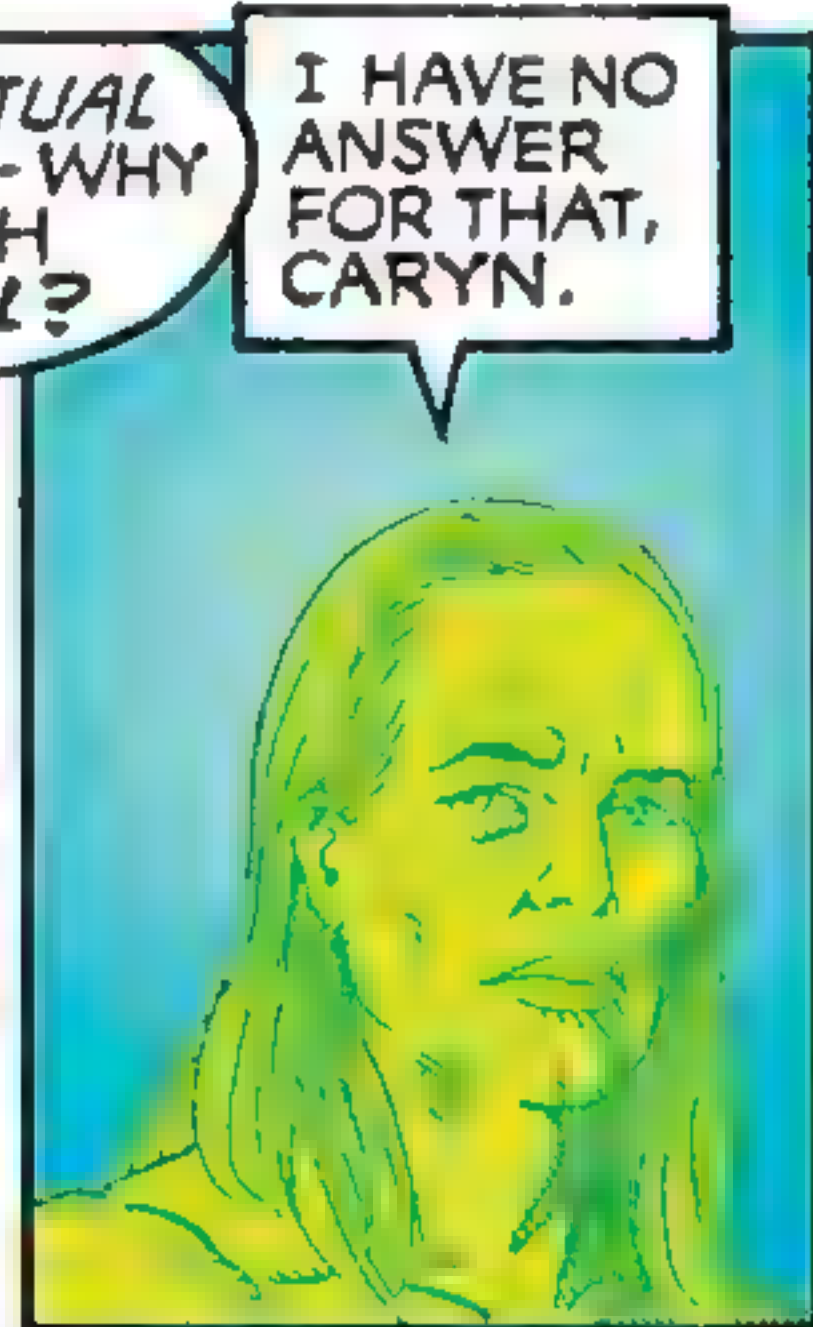
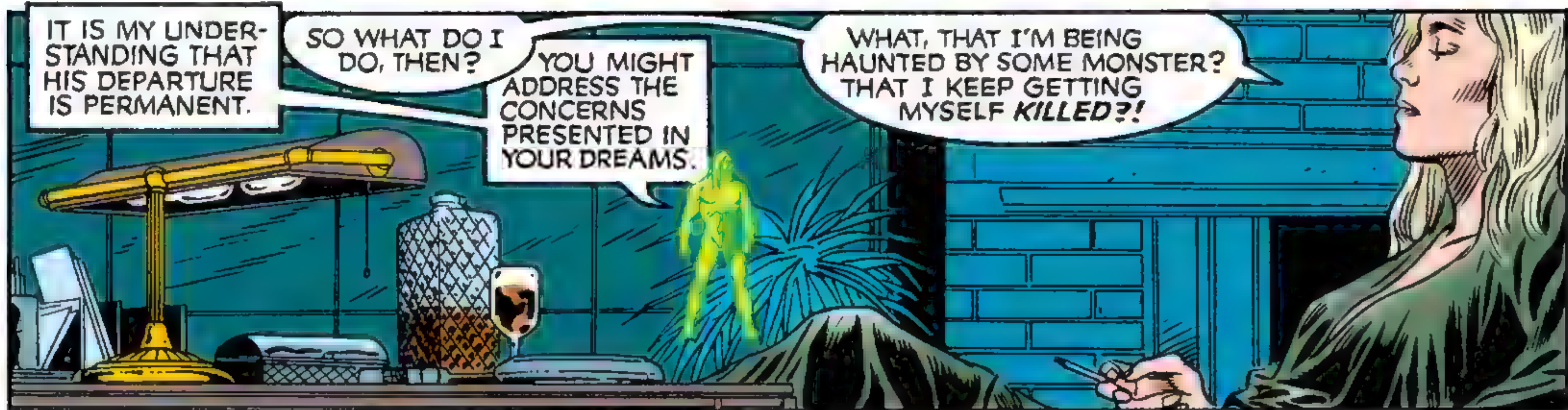
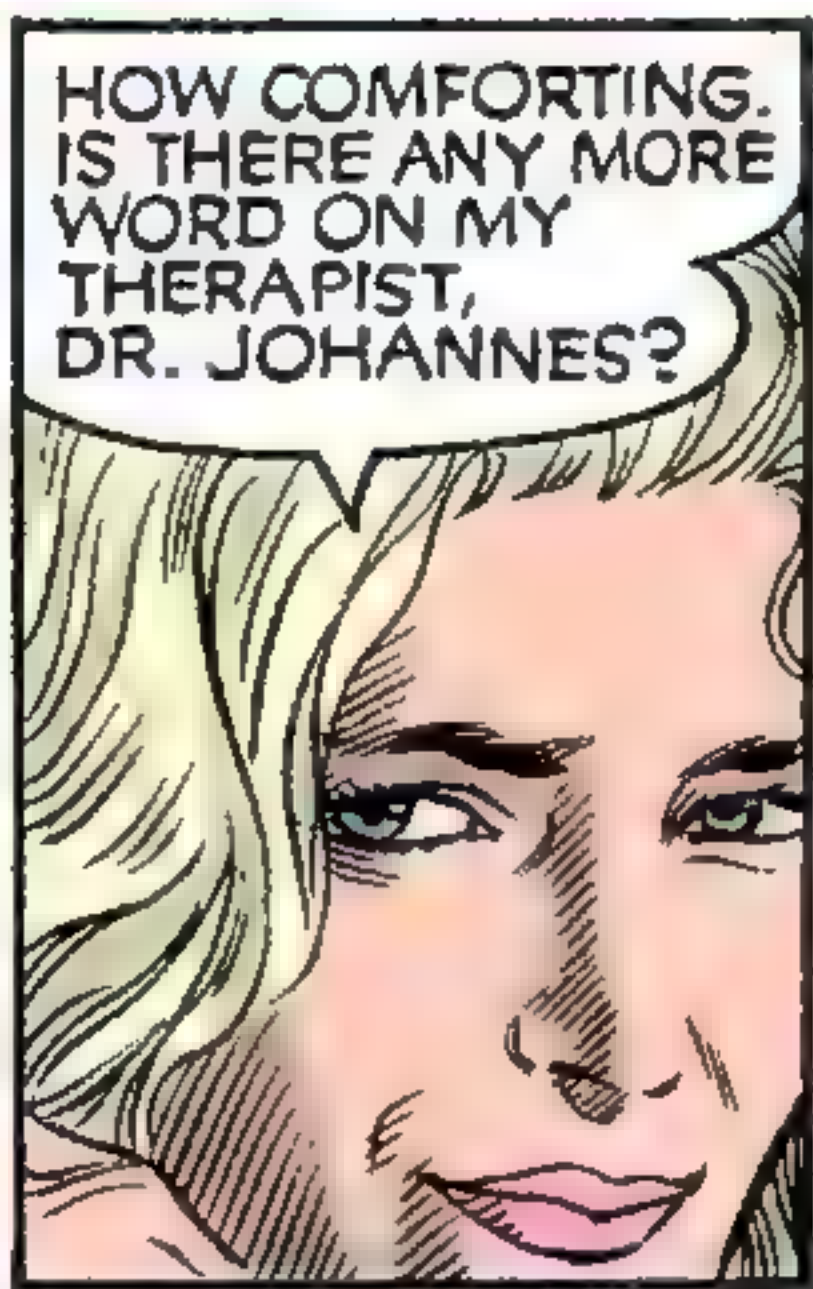
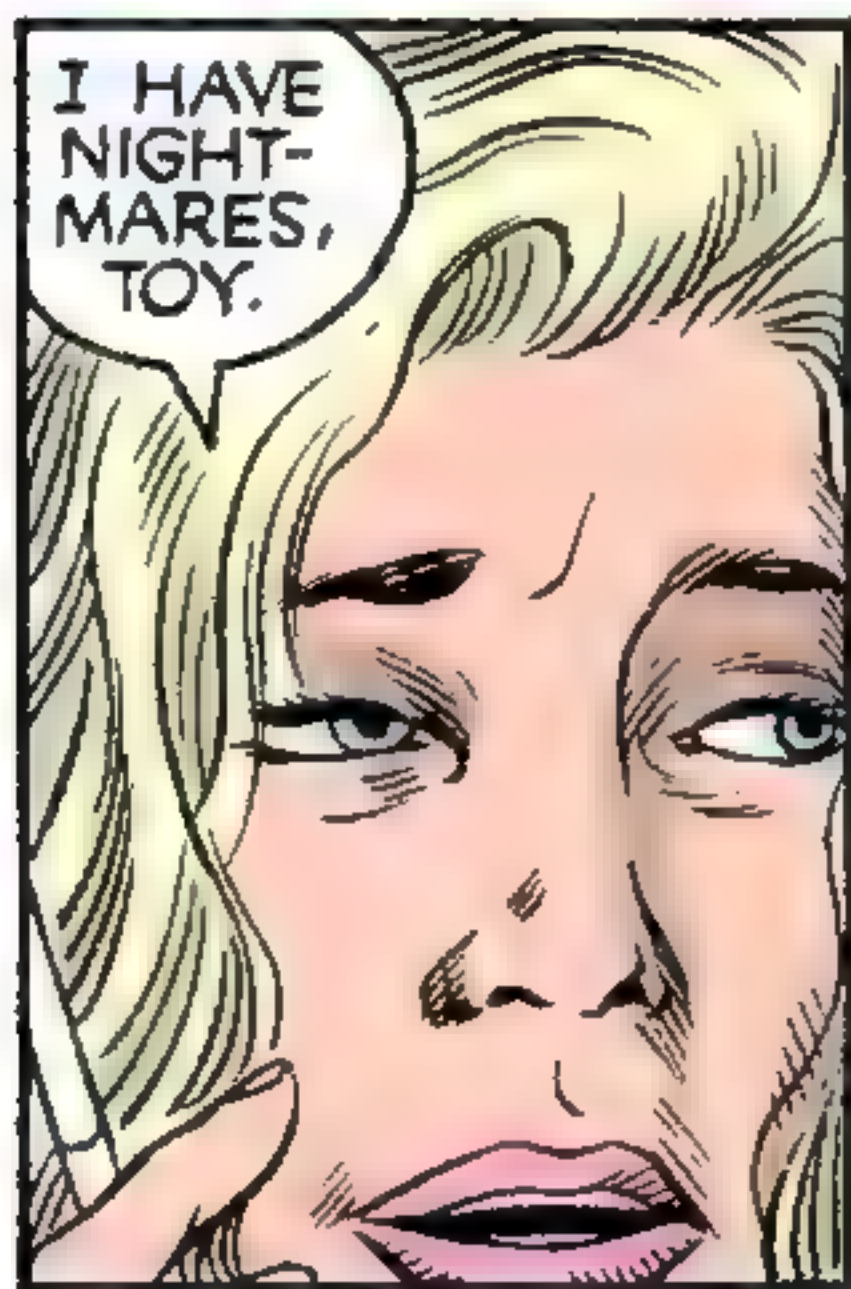
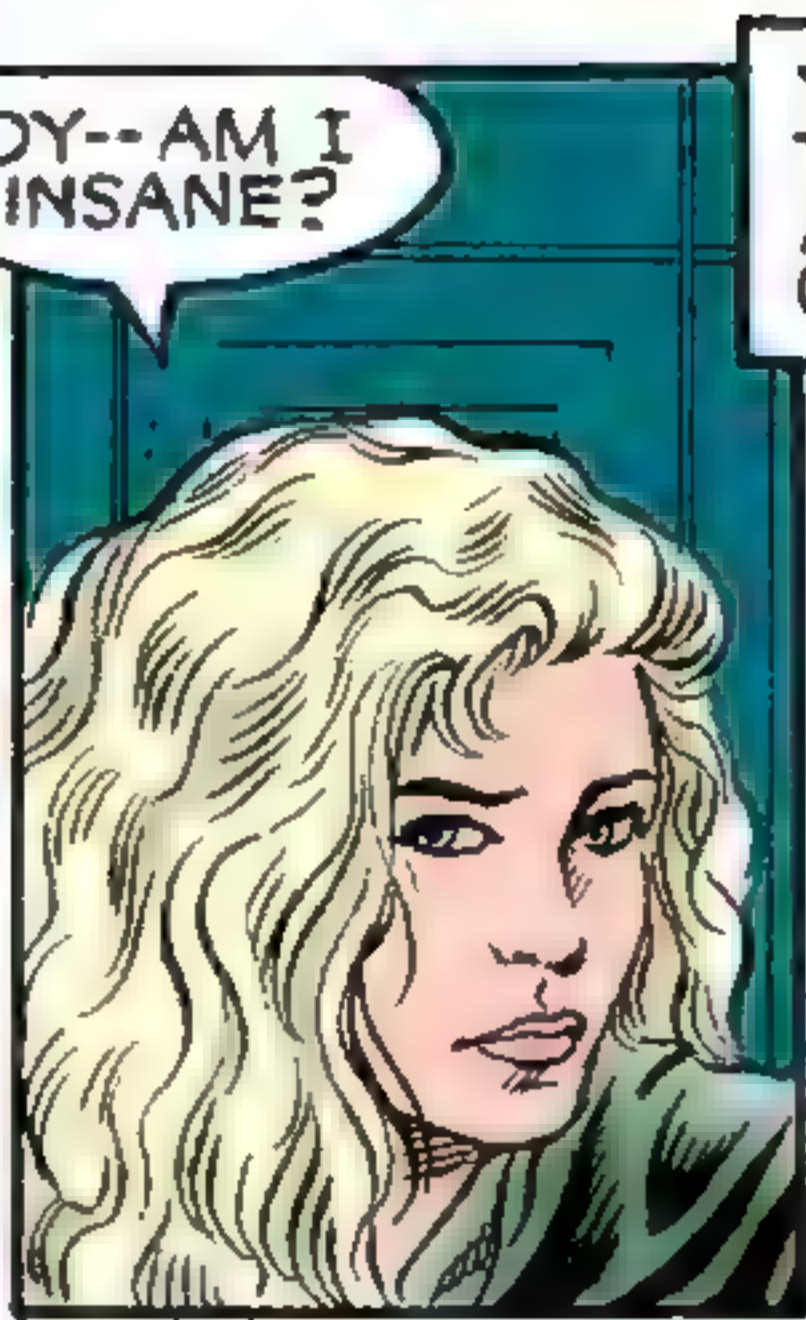
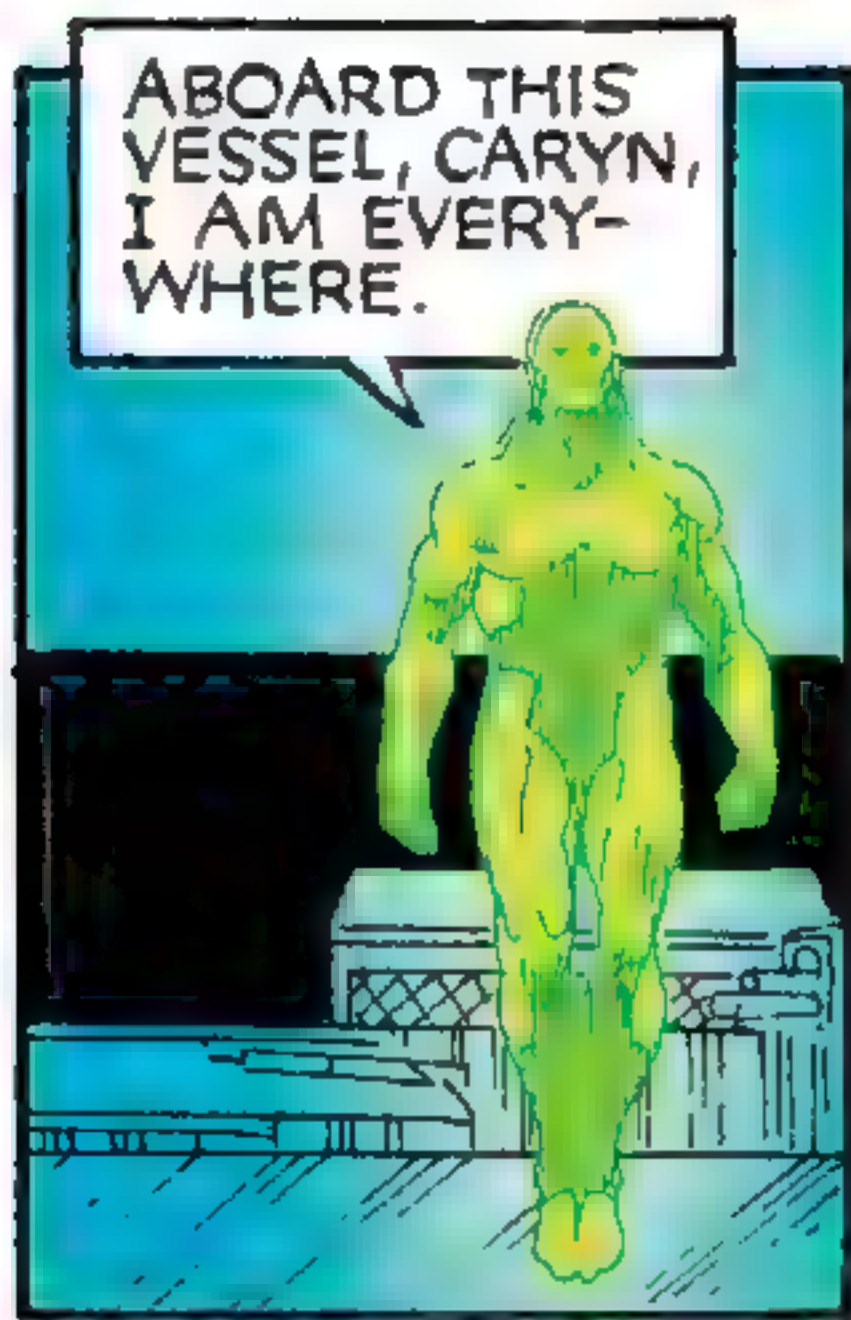


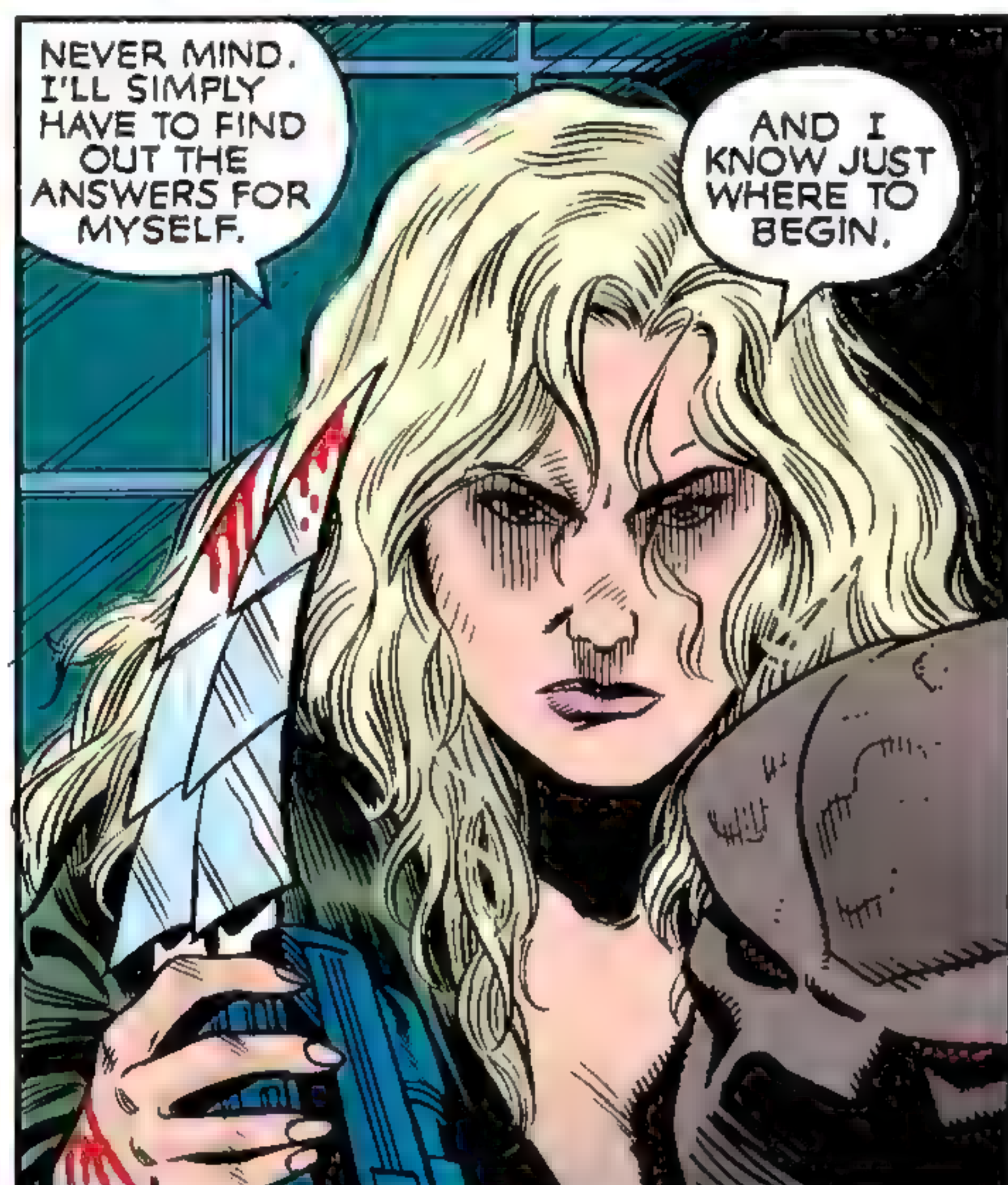
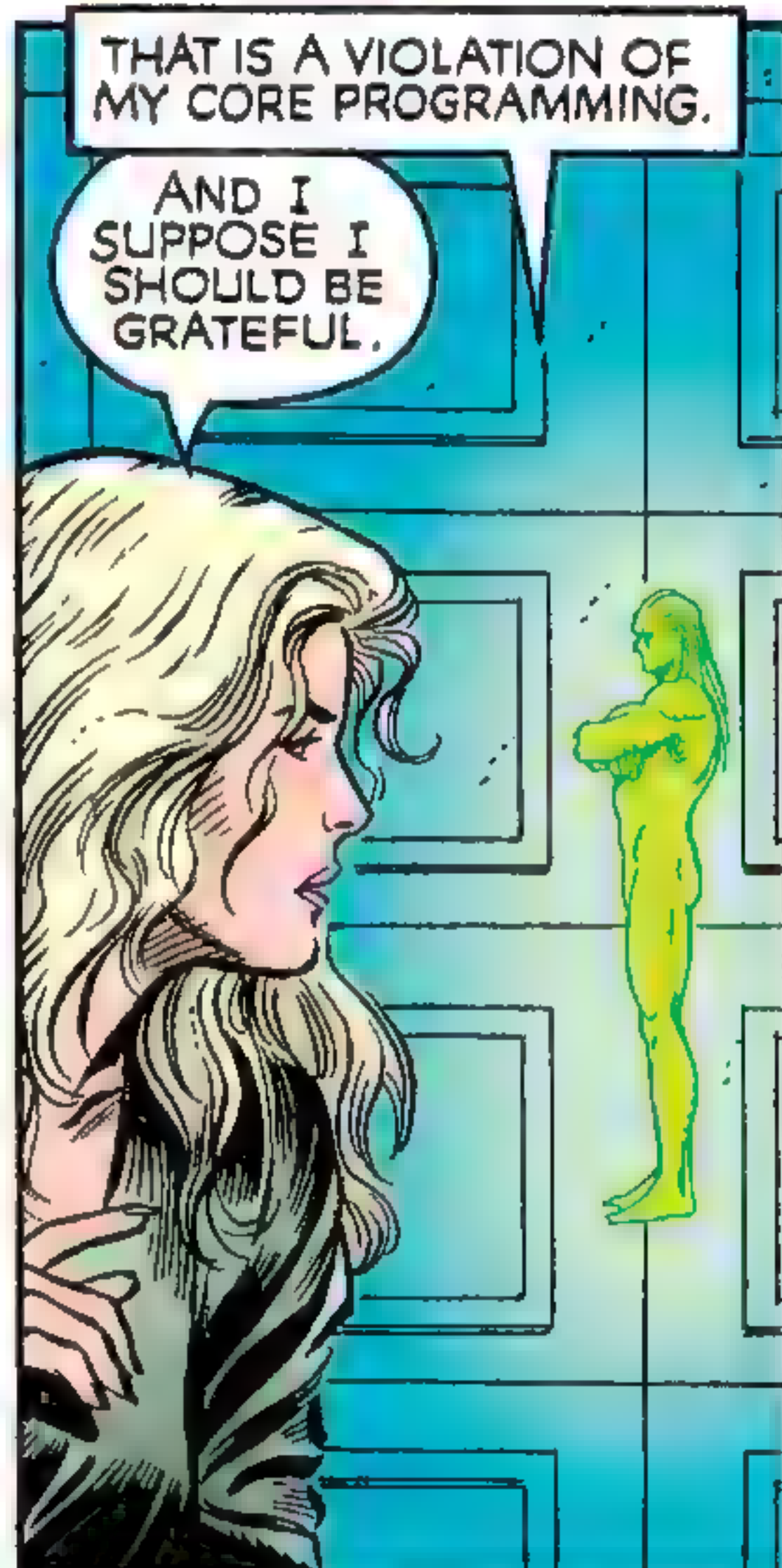
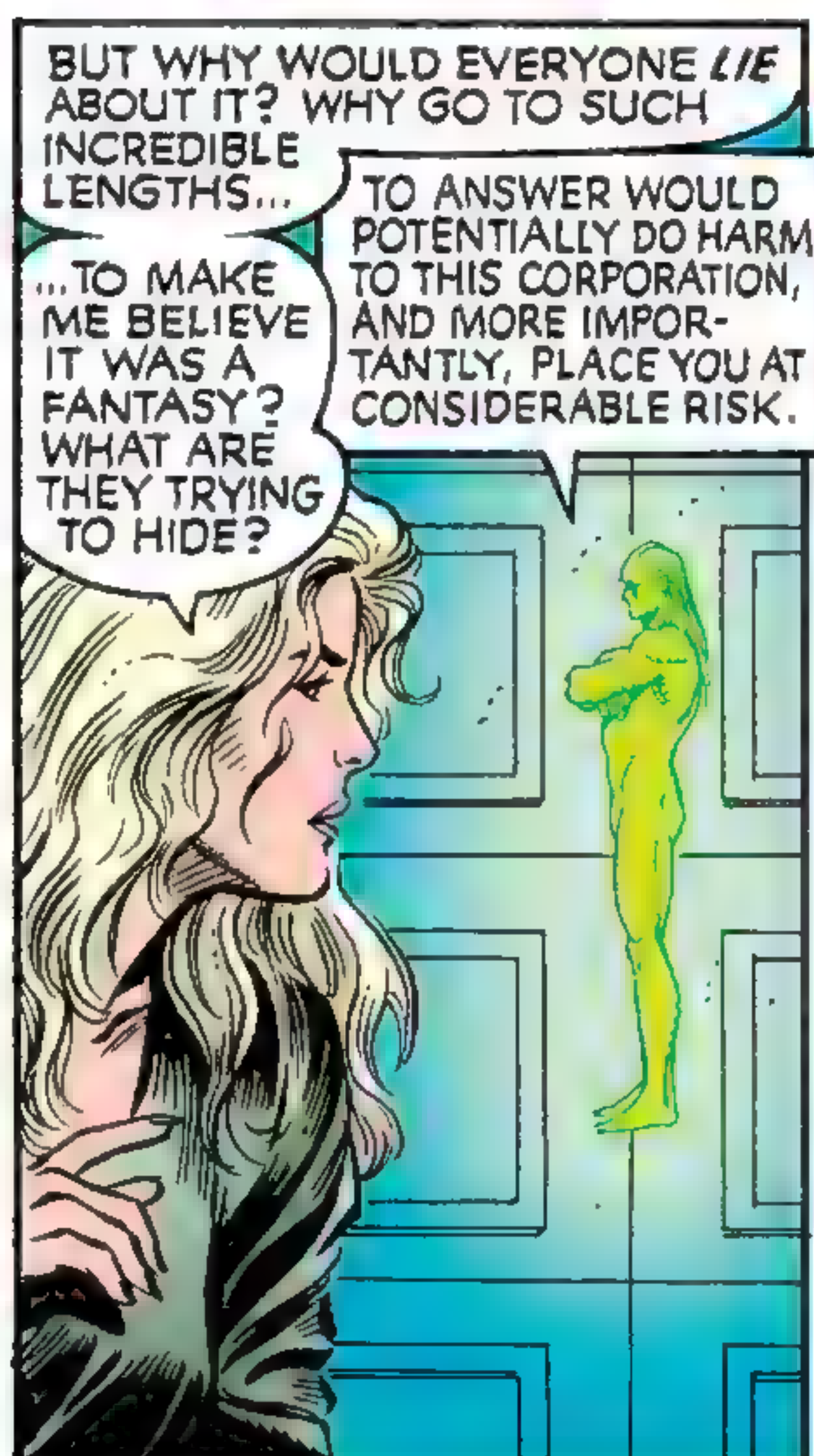
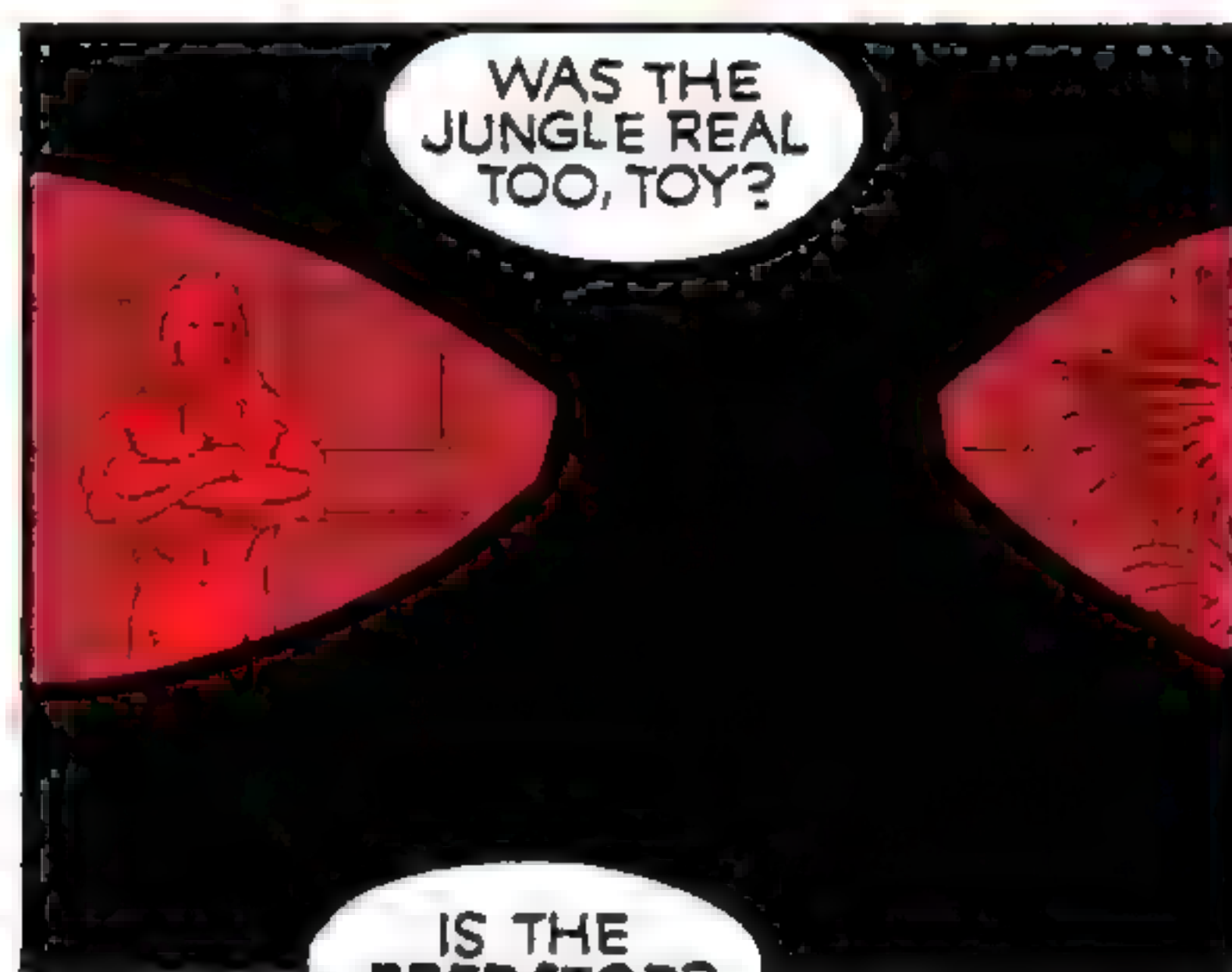
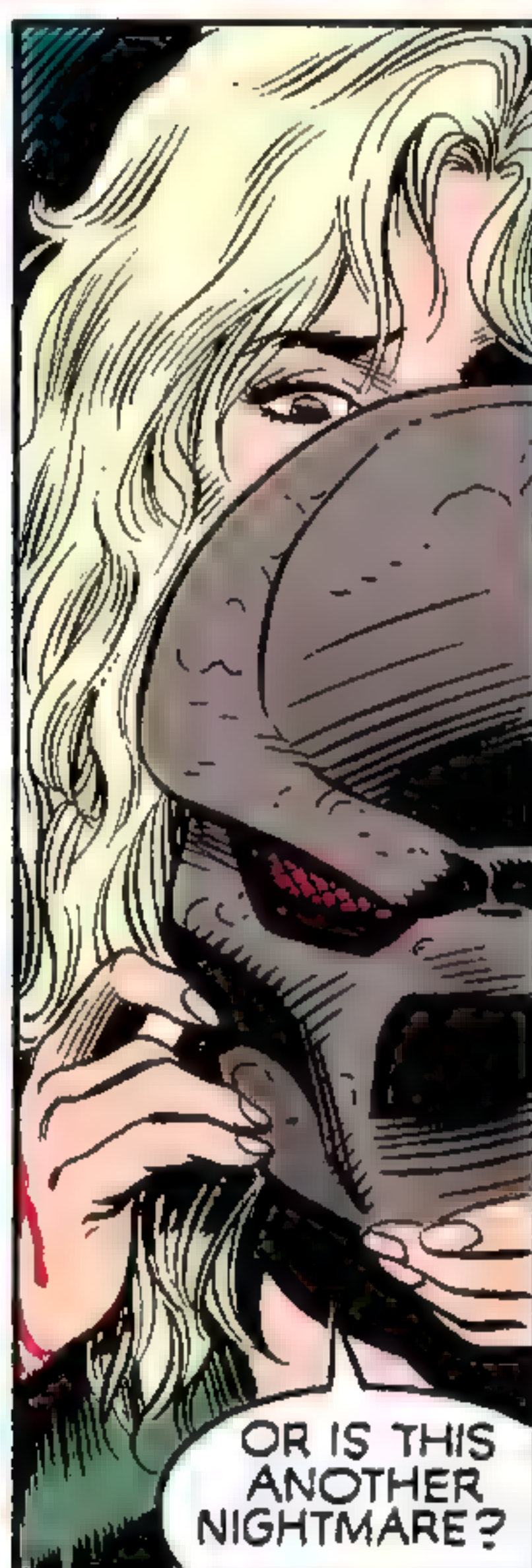
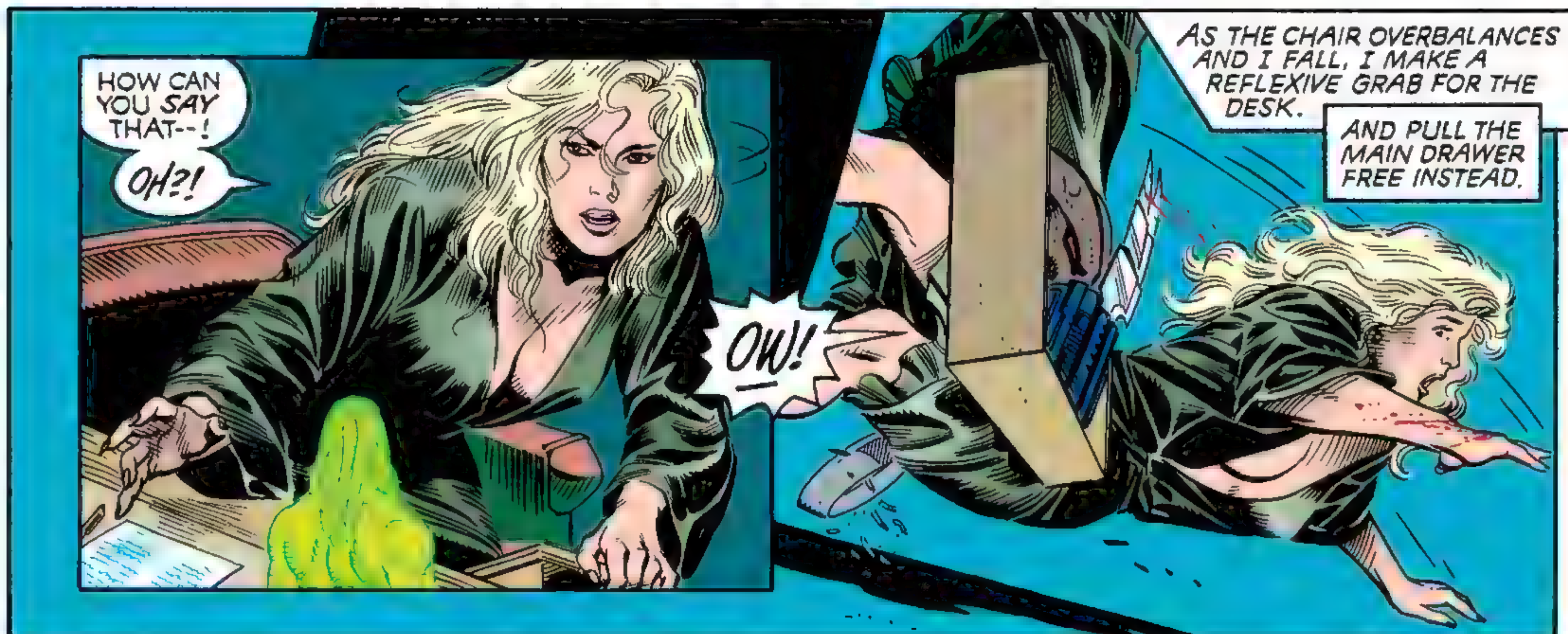
FROM THE DE
LUCIEN A. Del



WHY DOES IT HAUNT
ME? WHY DOES SHE?

ARE YOU
THERE,
TOY?





THE GREAT ESCAPE

IT'S LATE, AND GISANDE'S HAD A LONG, HARD DAY, POOR DEAR.

SHE'S CHIEF OF CORPORATE SECURITY FOR MONTCALM-DELACROIX et Cie. SHE REPORTS DIRECTLY TO THE GOVERNING BOARD, THROUGH MY HUSBAND'S SON, WILLEM.

SHE ISN'T EXPECTING TROUBLE.

ESPECIALLY FROM ME.

I WAITED UNTIL SHE UNLOCKED
HER DOOR BEFORE MAKING
MY MOVE.

VERY PROFESSIONAL.
I SURPRISE MYSELF AS
MUCH AS I DO HER.

CORPORATE
TROPHIES AREN'T
SUPPOSED TO KNOW
HOW TO STAGE
AN AMBUSH.

HOW
DARE
YOU?!

WHAT'S THE
MEANING
OF THIS?!

I'LL ASK THE
QUESTIONS.

WILLEM
WAS RIGHT,
CARYN-- YOU
HAVE GONE
MAD!

IN THAT
CASE, SINCE
I HAVE YOUR
GUN, PERHAPS
YOU'D BEST
HUMOR
ME.

WHERE IS IT,
GISANDE? THE
CREATURE I
FOUGHT IN THE
JUNGLE--

--WHAT HAVE
YOU DONE
WITH IT?!

I
THOUGHT
YOU
UNDER-
STOOD--

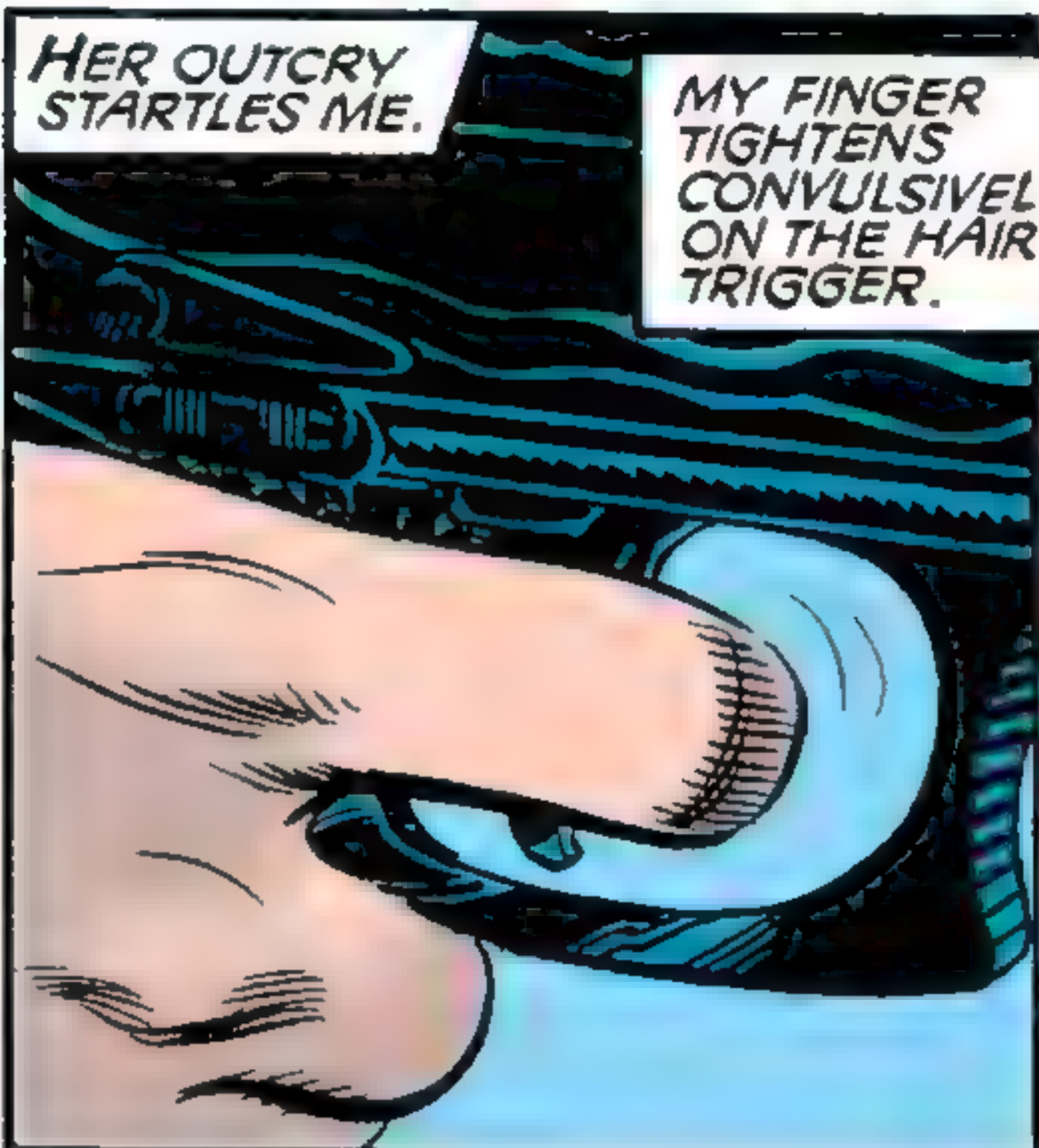
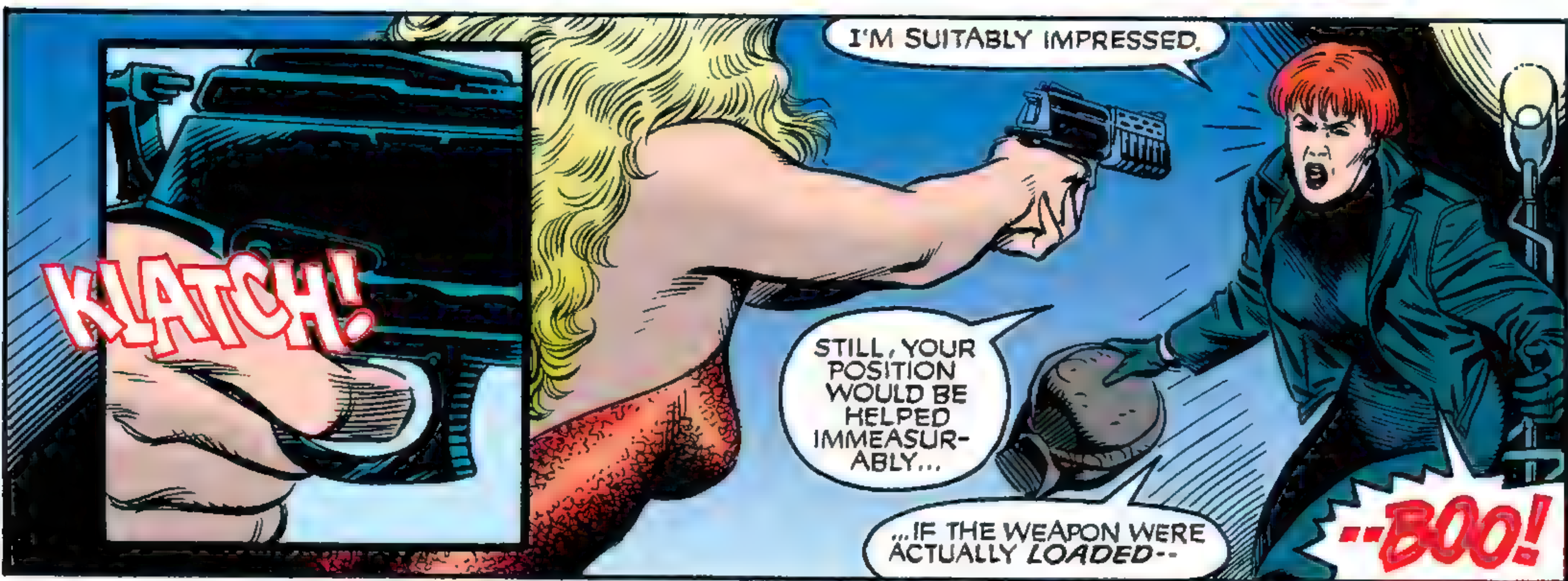
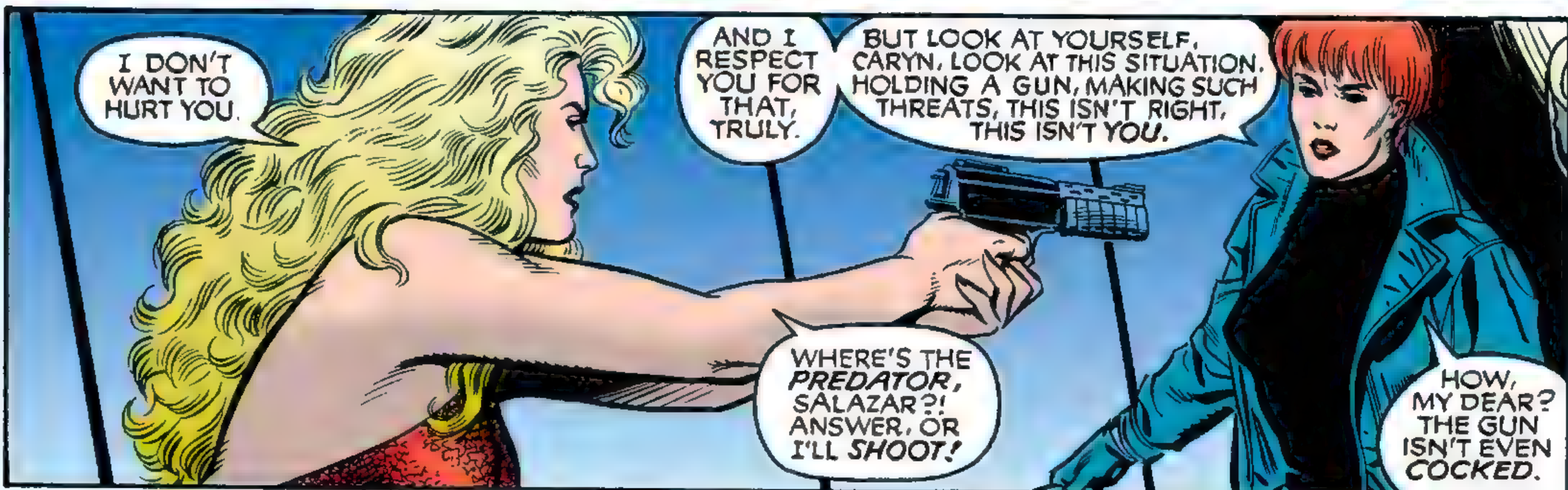
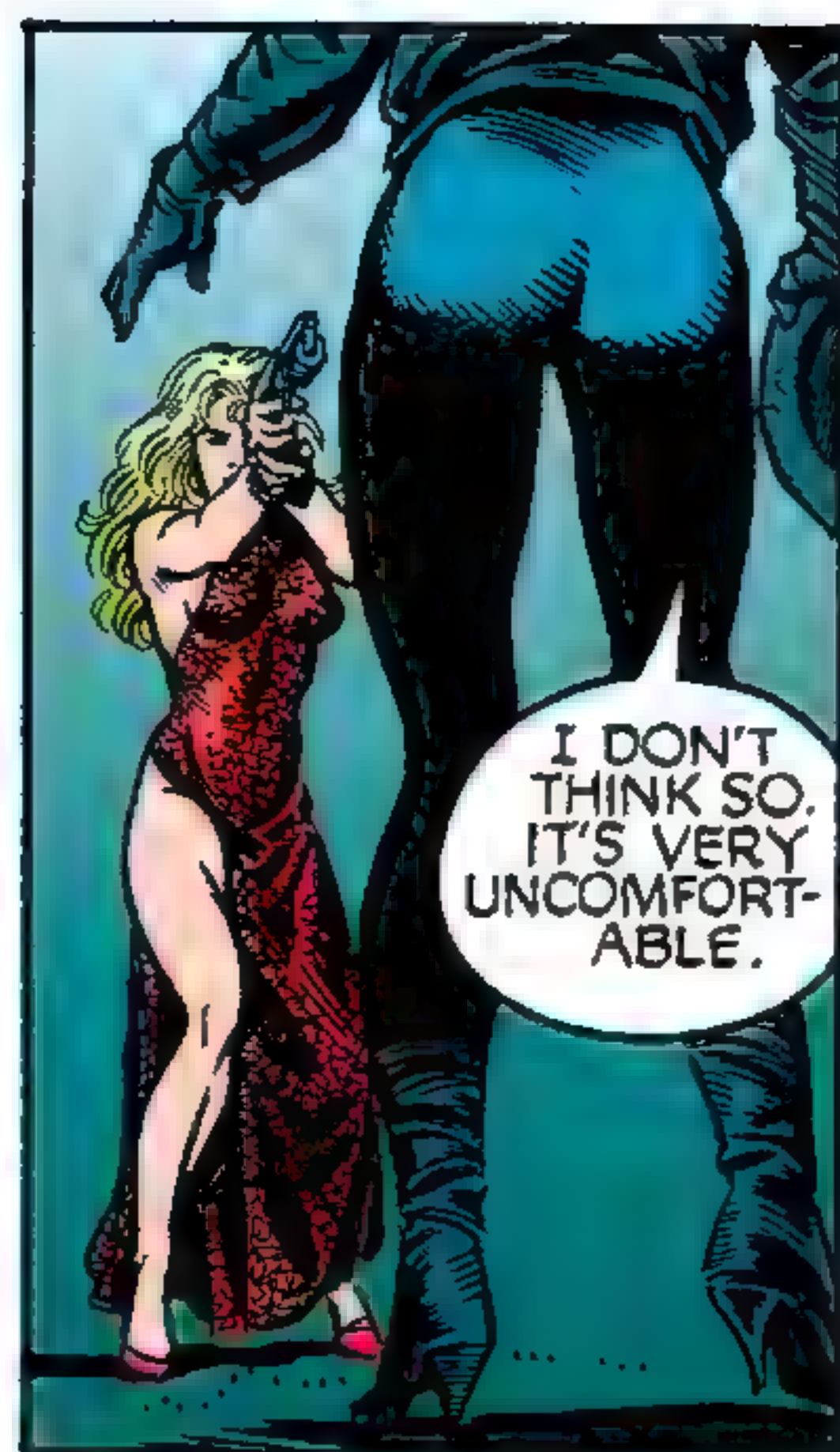
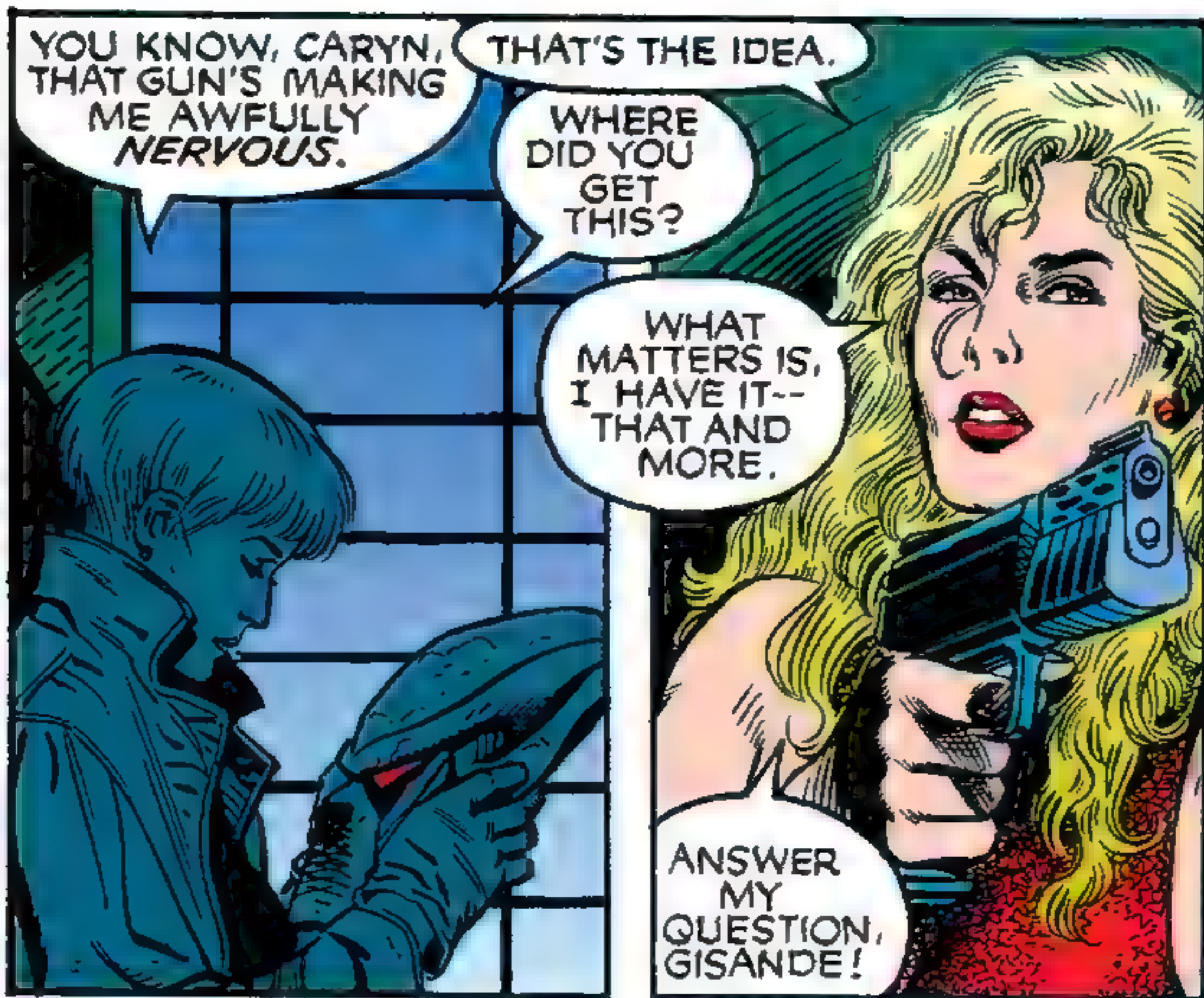
--INASMUCH AS YOUR KIND IS
CAPABLE OF UNDERSTANDING--
THAT DUEL WAS A VIRTUAL
REALITY SCENARIO.

IT NEVER
HAPPENED,
CARYN.

YOUR
"CREATURE"
DOESN'T
EXIST.

THEN
WHAT
THE
HELL IS
THIS--

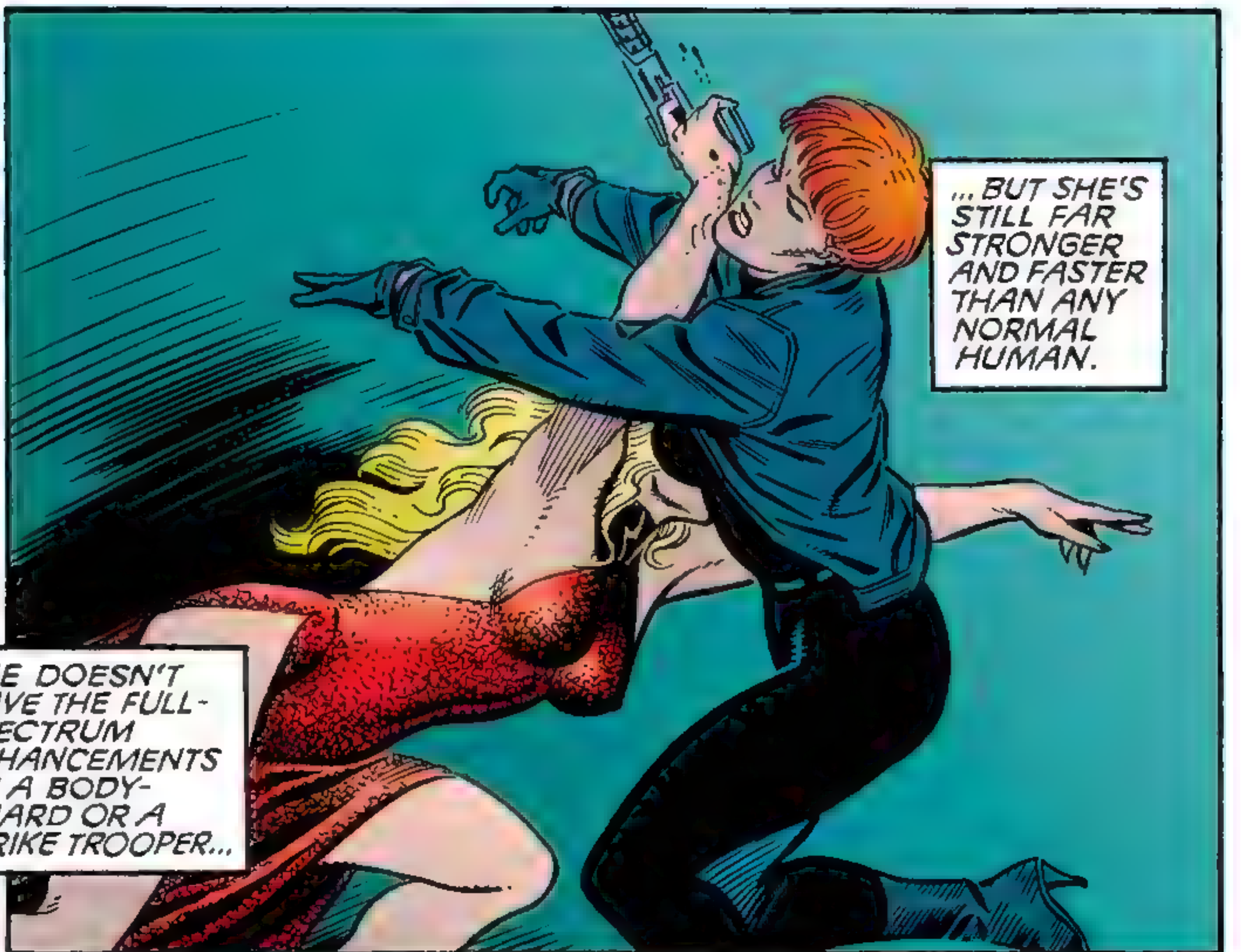
--A
PROP?!



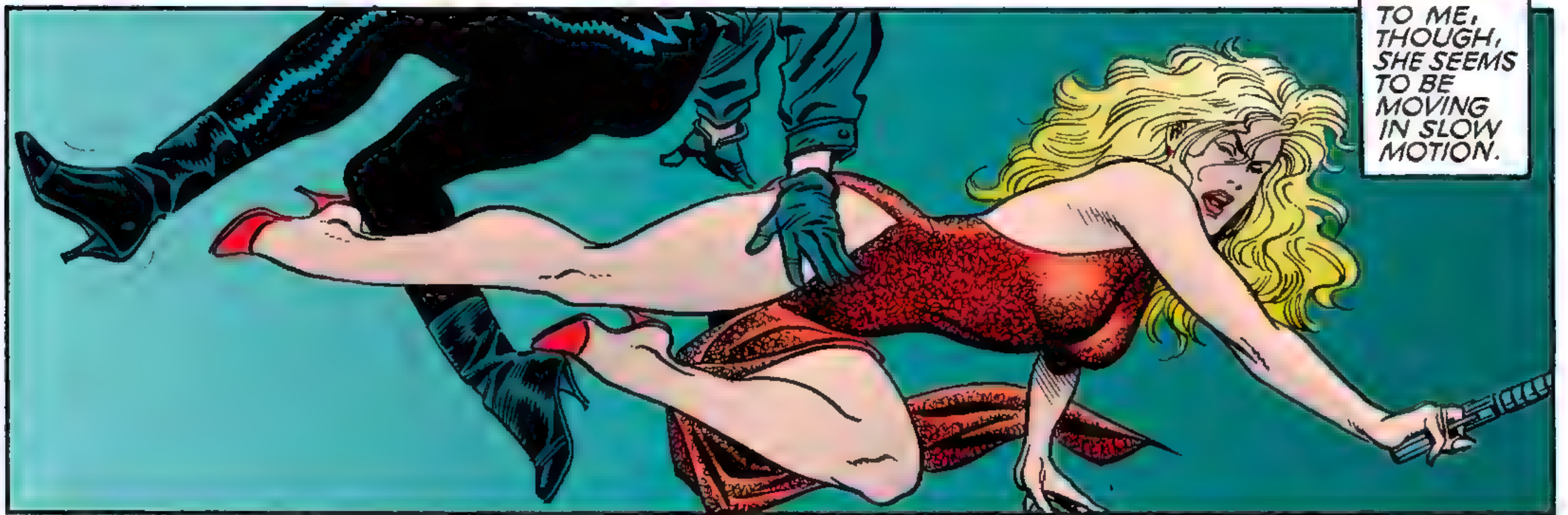


NOW IT'S MY TURN!

SHE DOESN'T HAVE THE FULL-SPECTRUM ENHANCEMENTS OF A BODY-GUARD OR A STRIKE TROOPER...



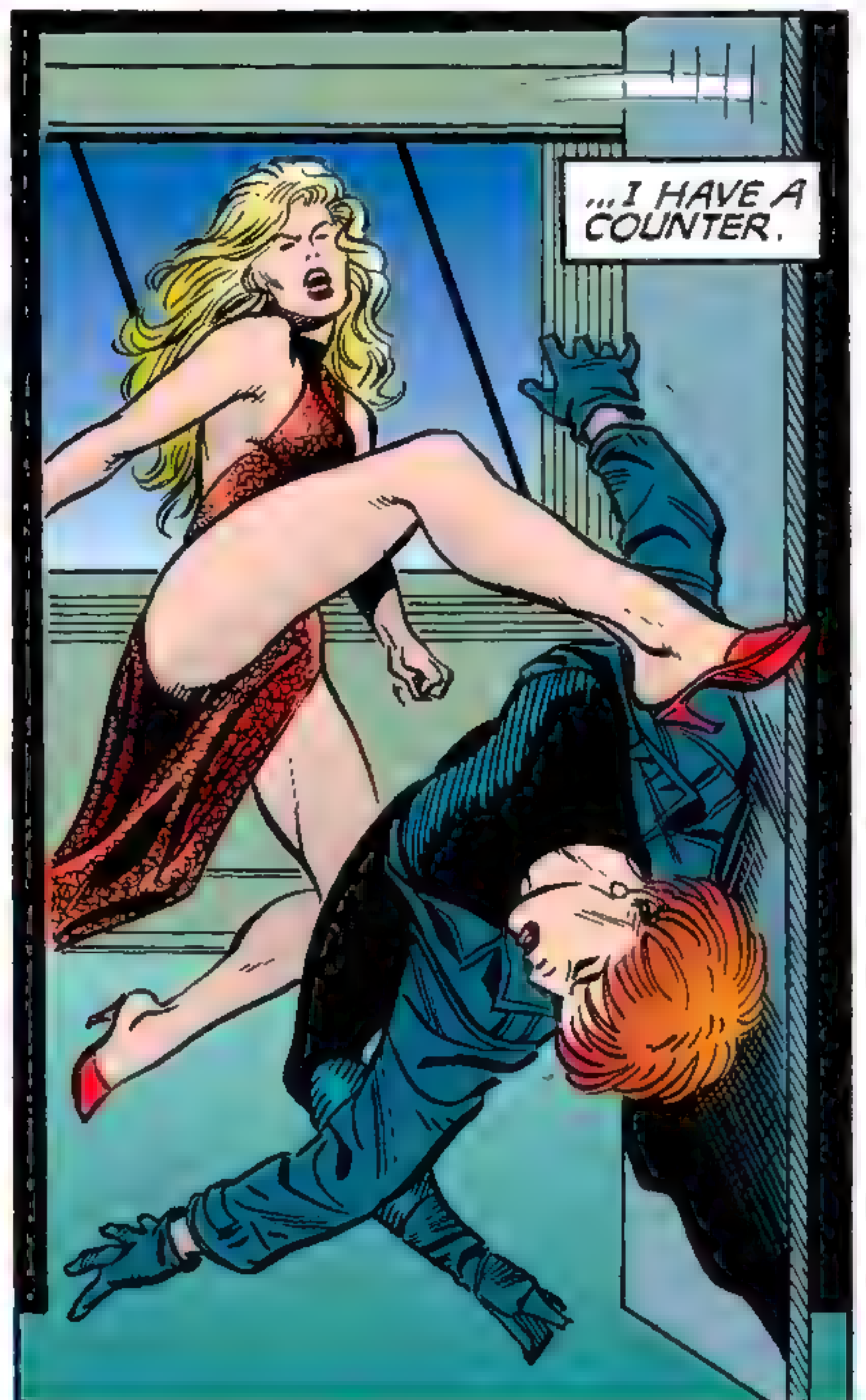
...BUT SHE'S STILL FAR STRONGER AND FASTER THAN ANY NORMAL HUMAN.



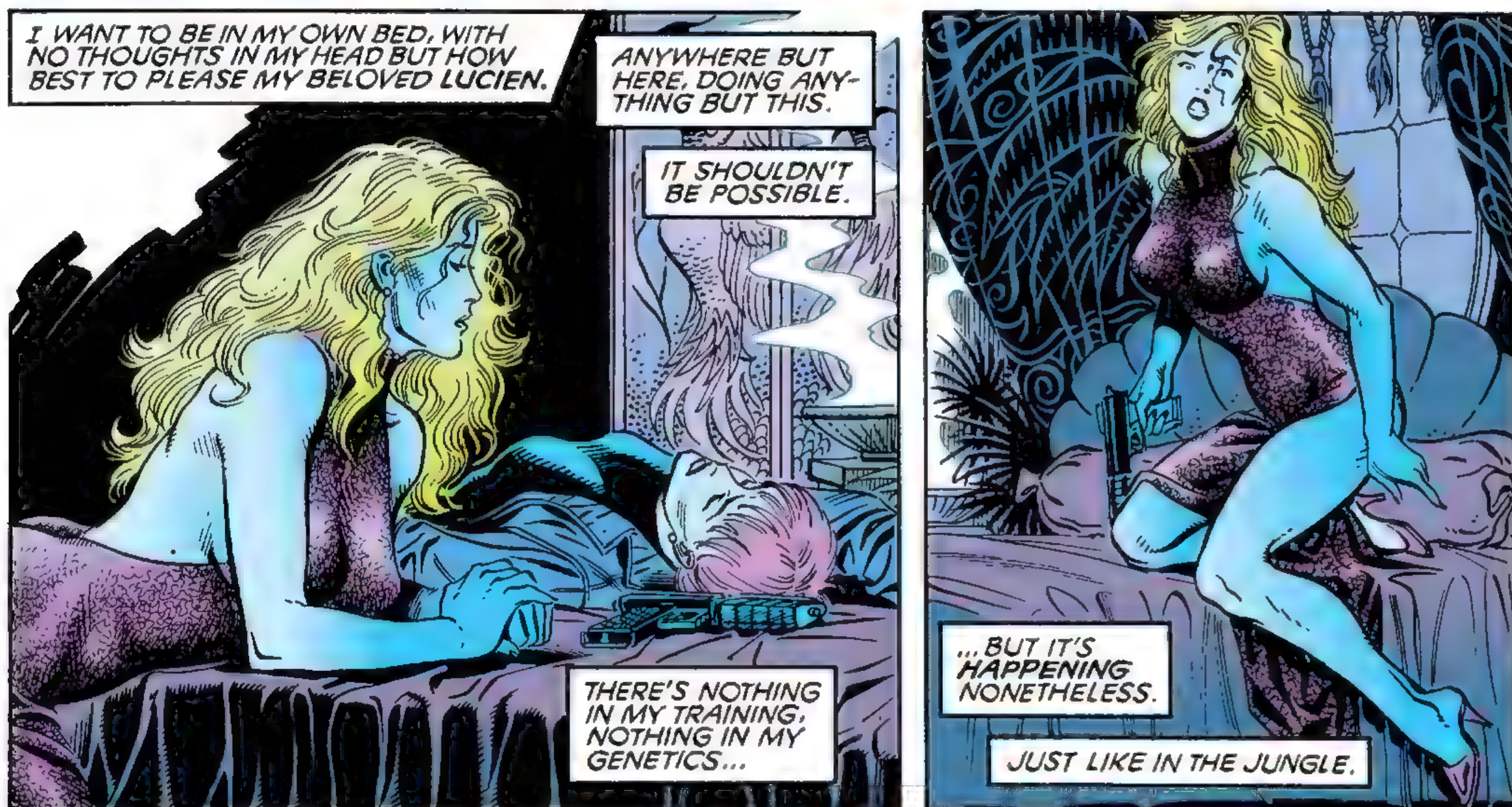
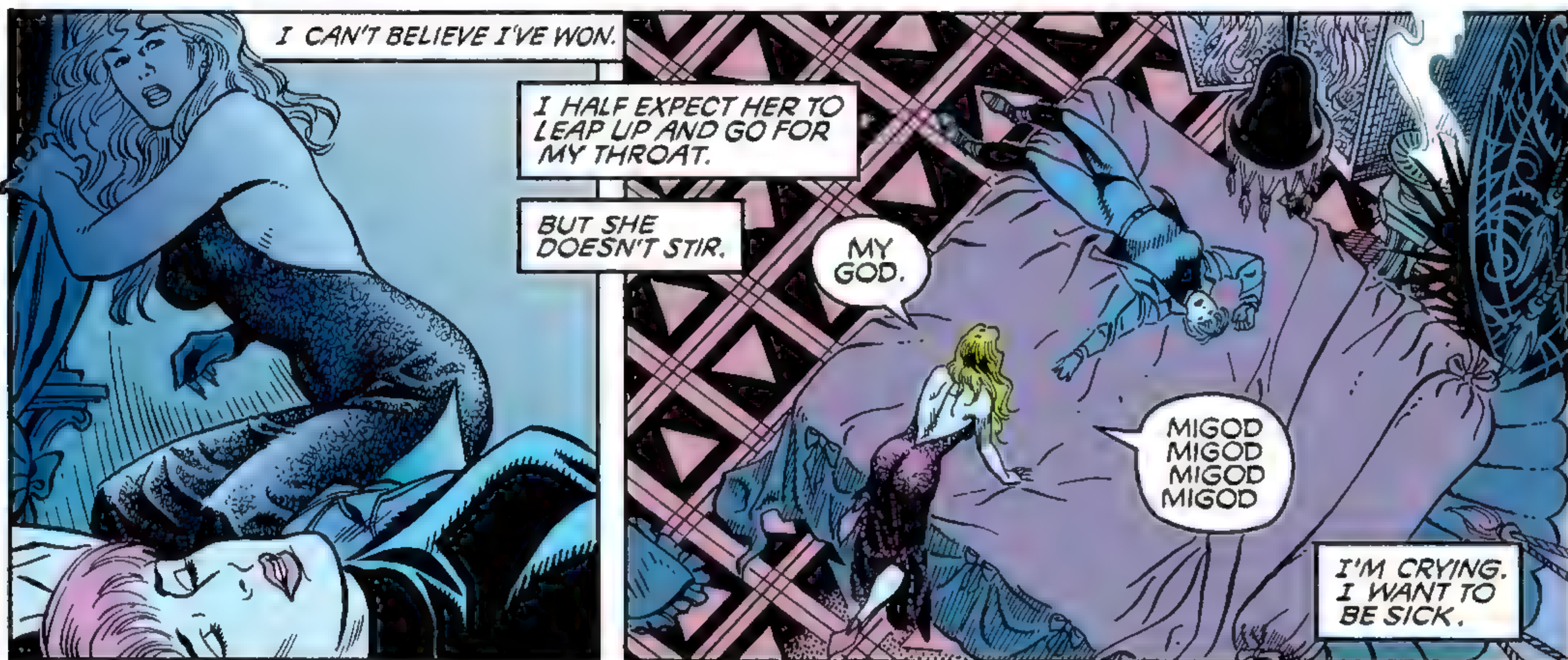
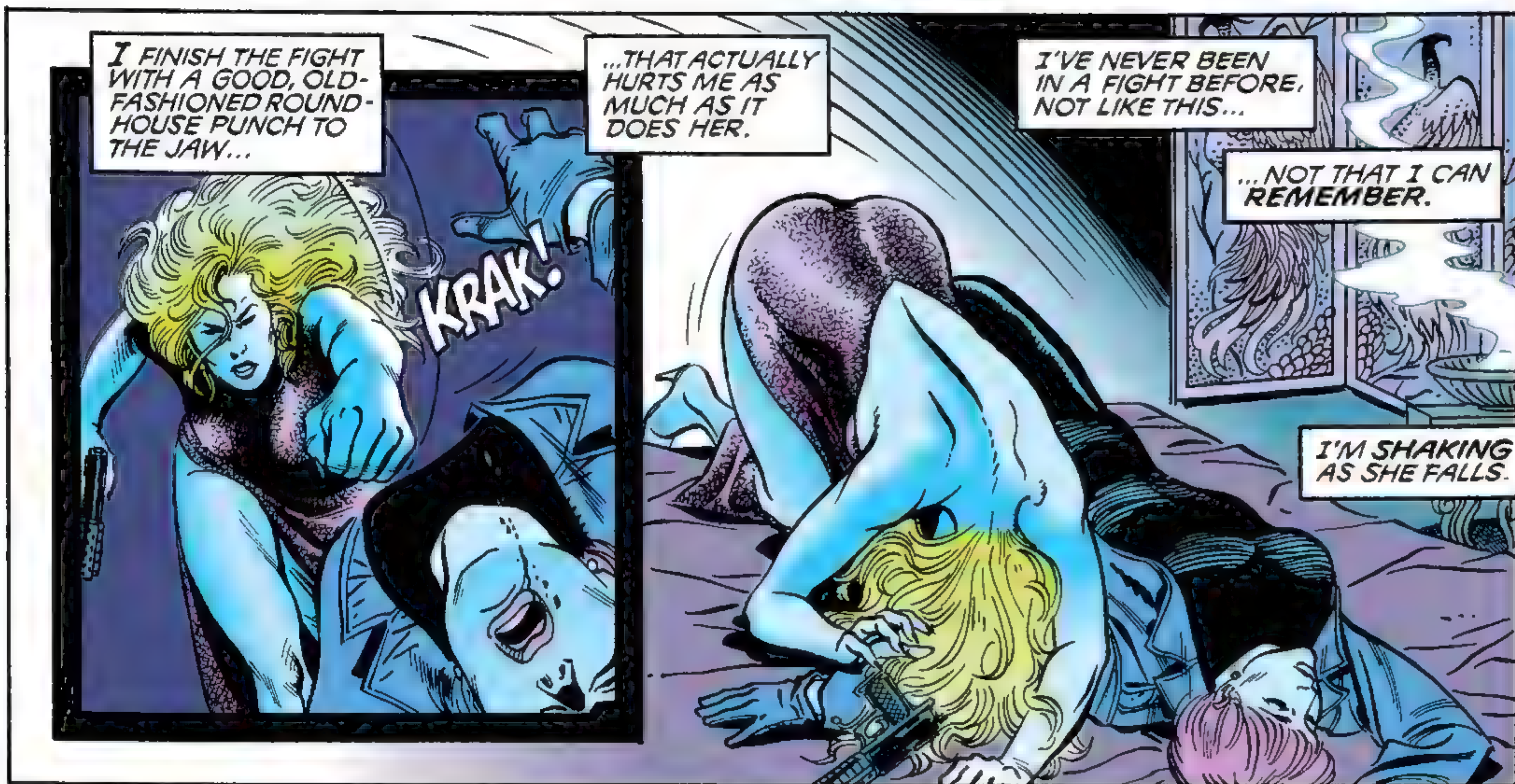
TO ME, THOUGH, SHE SEEMS TO BE MOVING IN SLOW MOTION.

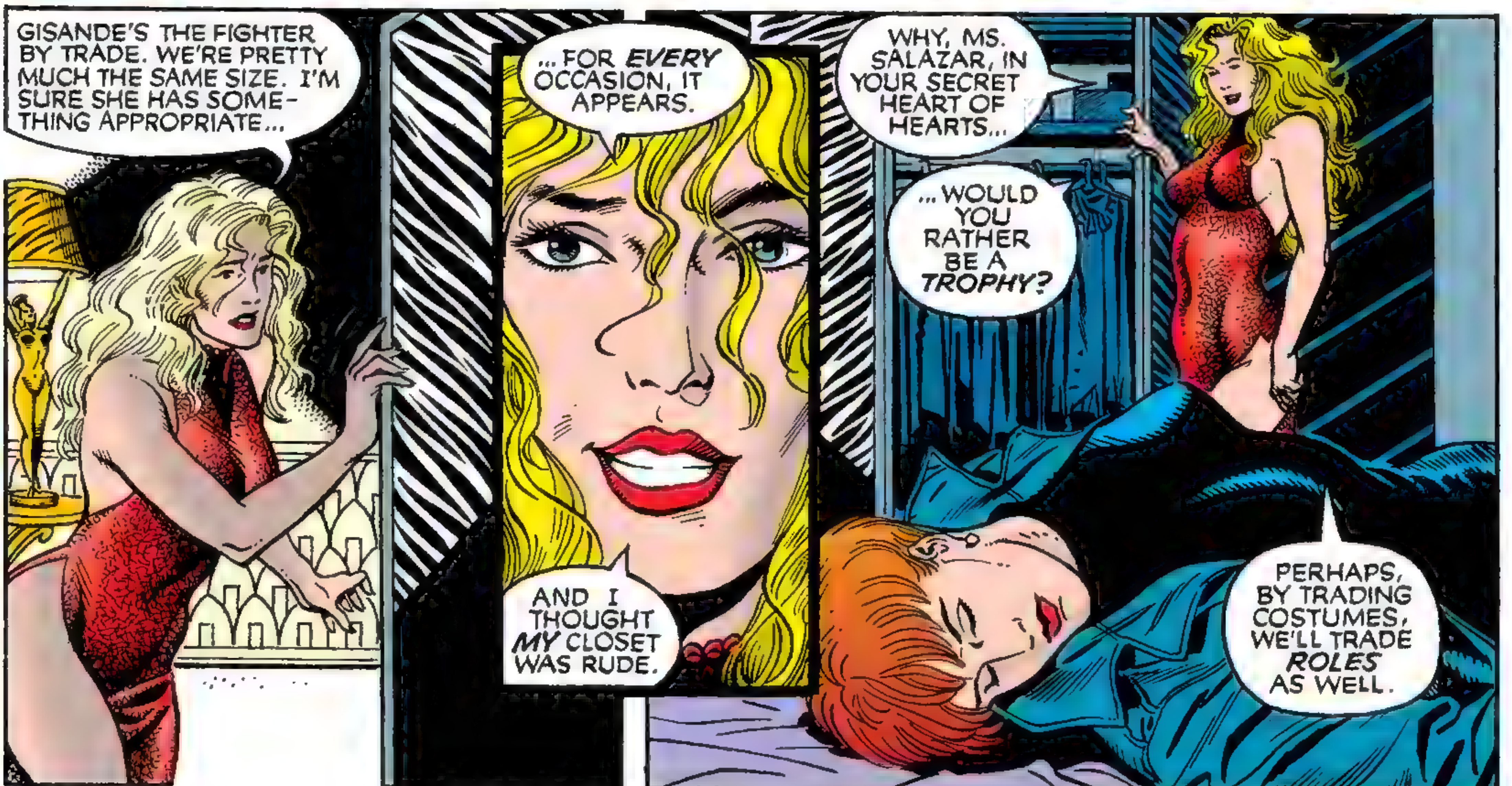
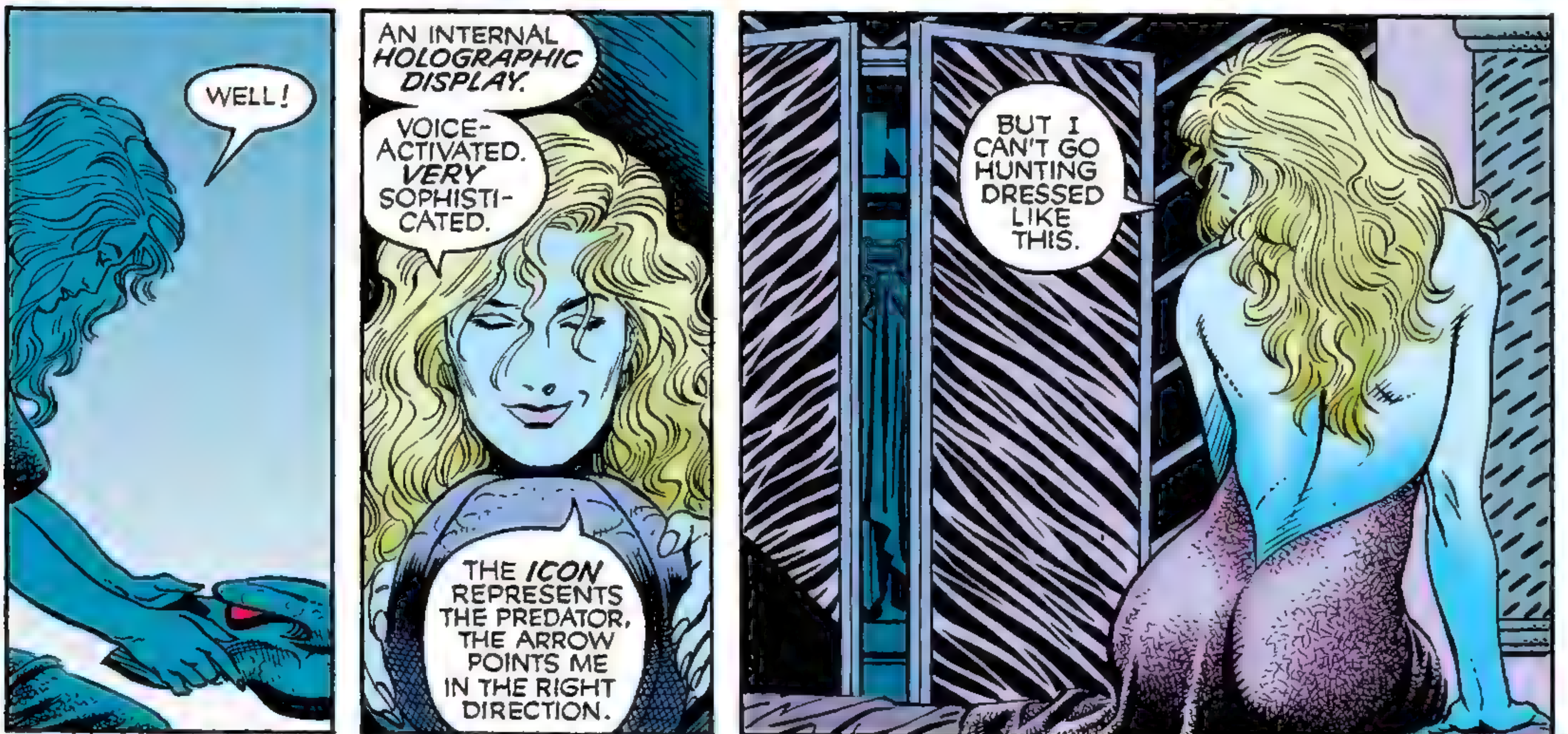
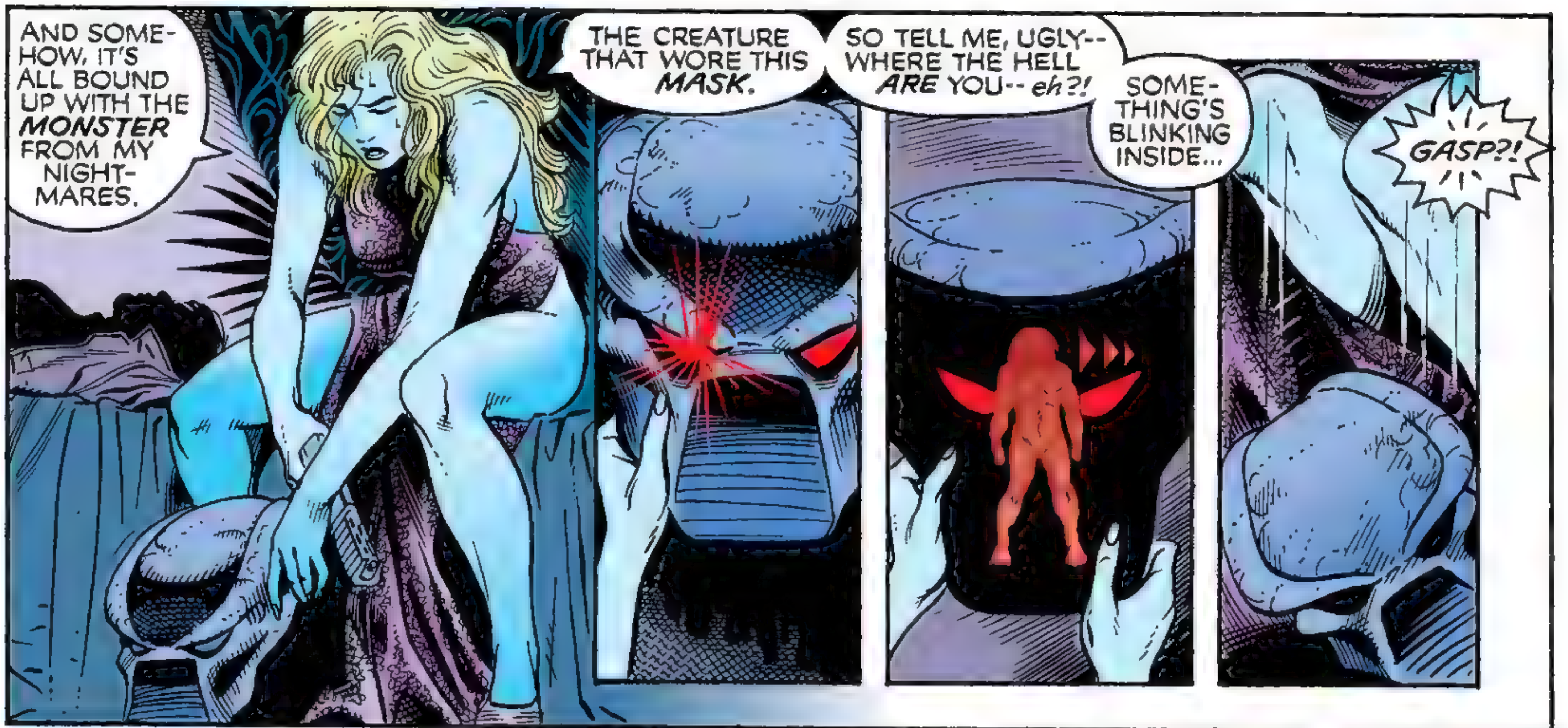


AND FOR HER EVERY ATTACK...



...I HAVE A COUNTER.

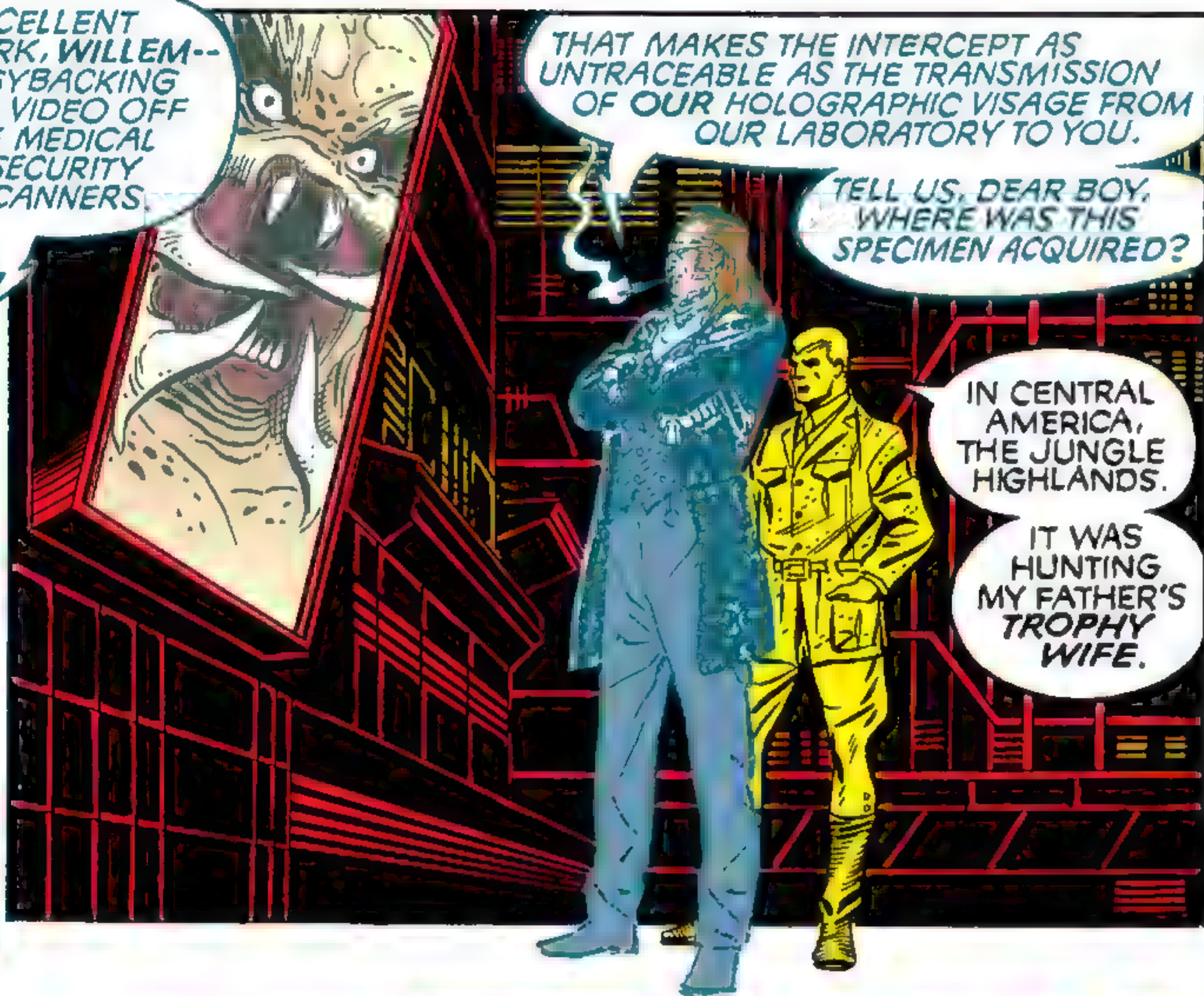






ELSEWHERE,
ABOARD THE
SKYLINER...

EXCELLENT
WORK, WILLEM--
PIGGYBACKING
THIS VIDEO OFF
THE MEDICAL
SECURITY
SCANNERS.

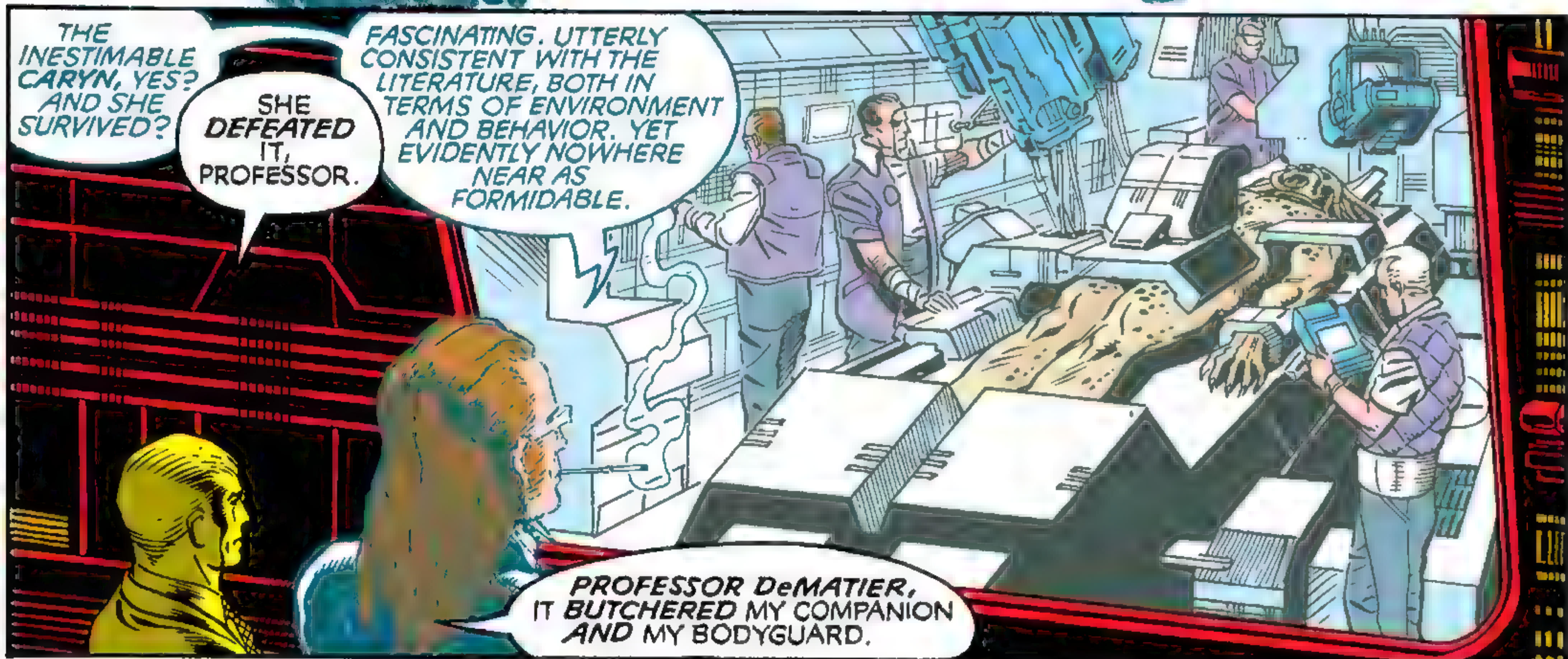


THAT MAKES THE INTERCEPT AS
UNTRACEABLE AS THE TRANSMISSION
OF OUR HOLOGRAPHIC VISAGE FROM
OUR LABORATORY TO YOU.

TELL US, DEAR BOY,
WHERE WAS THIS
SPECIMEN ACQUIRED?

IN CENTRAL
AMERICA,
THE JUNGLE
HIGHLANDS.

IT WAS
HUNTING
MY FATHER'S
TROPHY
WIFE.



THE
INESTIMABLE
CARYN, YES?
AND SHE
SURVIVED?

SHE
DEFEATED
IT,
PROFESSOR.

FASCINATING. UTTERLY
CONSISTENT WITH THE
LITERATURE, BOTH IN
TERMS OF ENVIRONMENT
AND BEHAVIOR. YET
EVIDENTLY NOWHERE
NEAR AS
FORMIDABLE.

PROFESSOR DeMATIER,
IT BUTCHERED MY COMPANION
AND MY BODYGUARD.



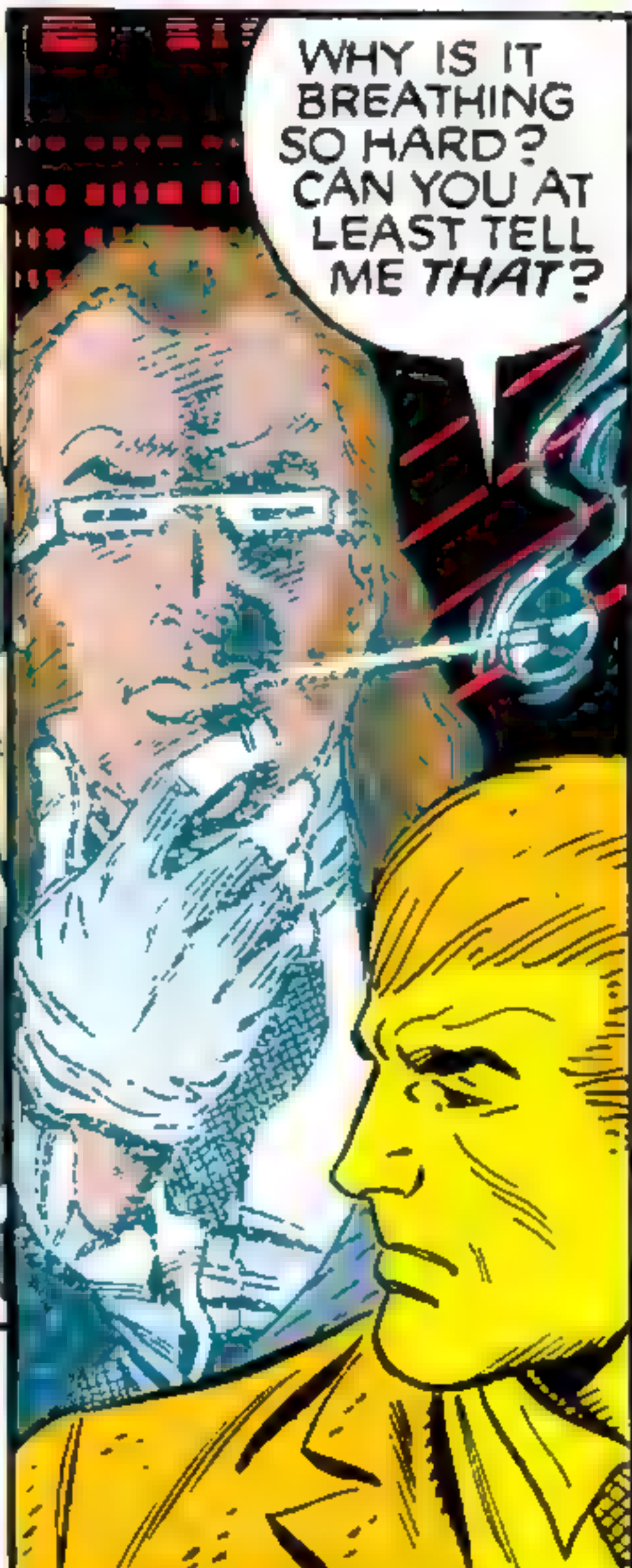
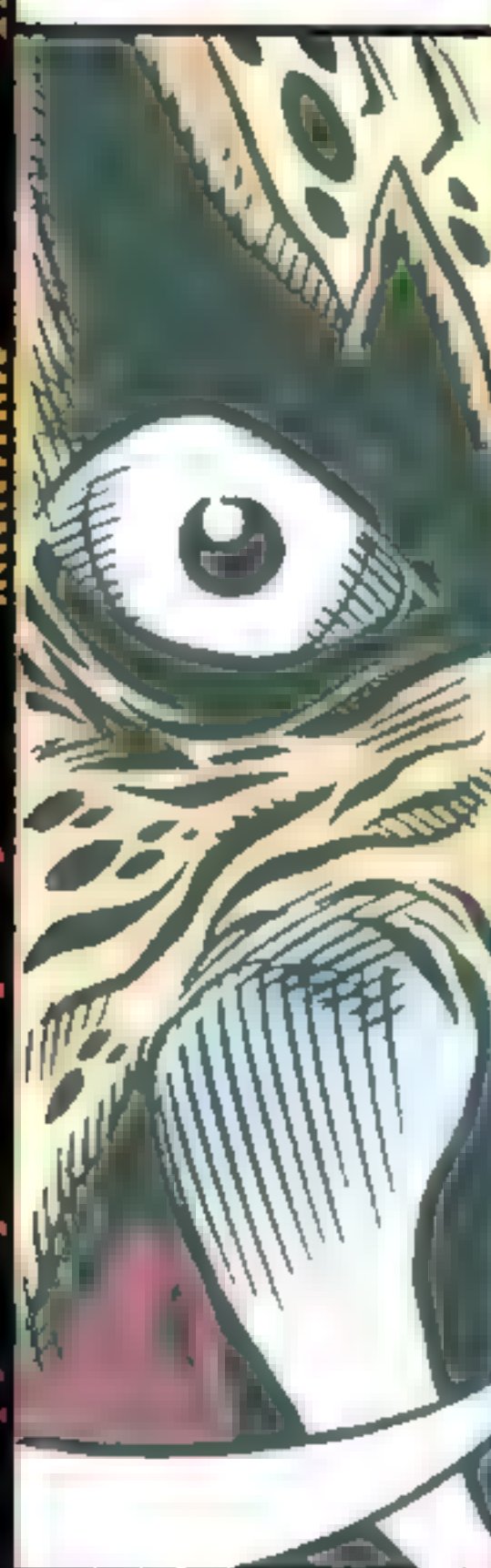
TRUE, DEAR BOY, BUT
WHY DID IT CHOOSE TO
ABDUCT THE TROPHY?

DON'T
YOU
KNOW?

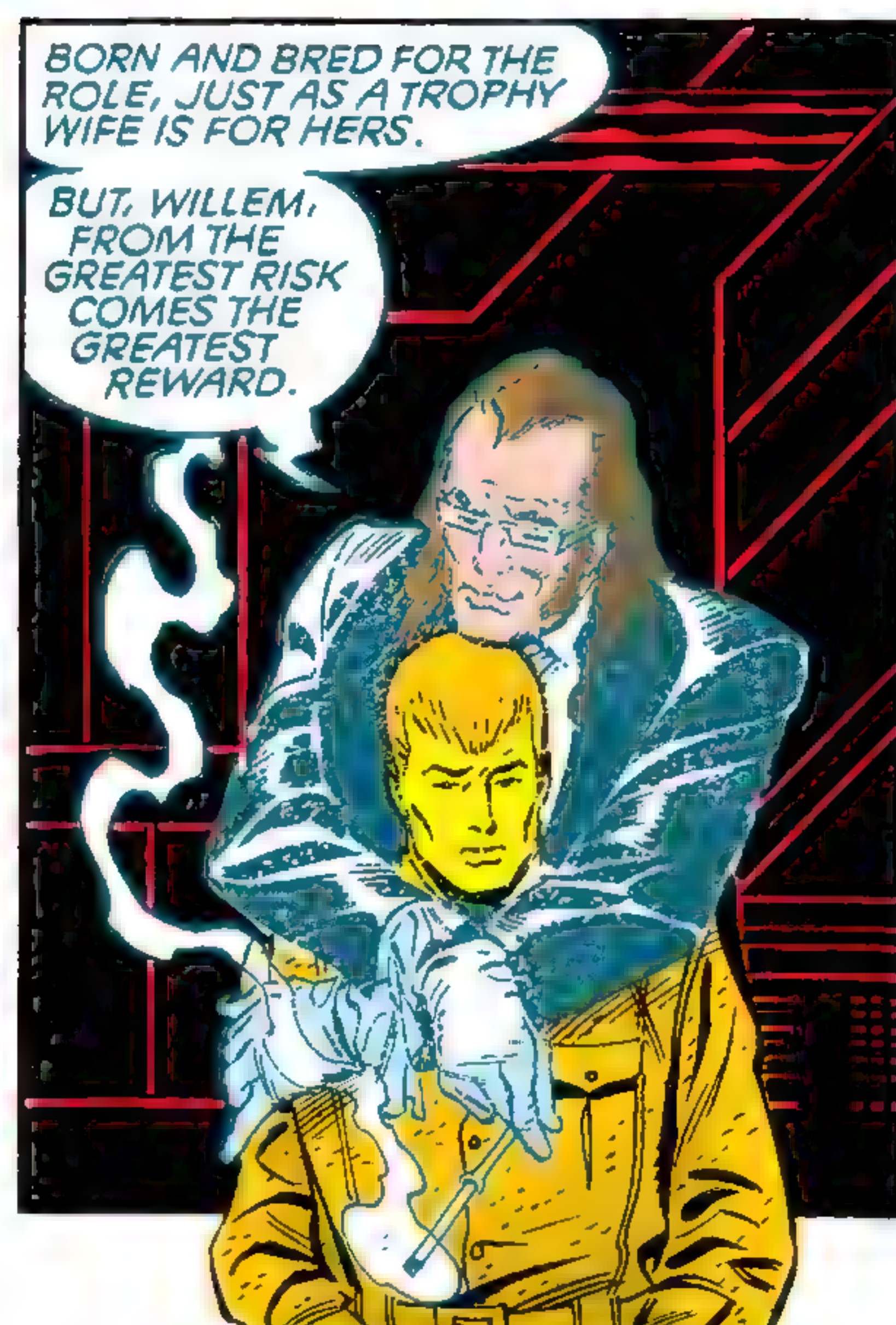
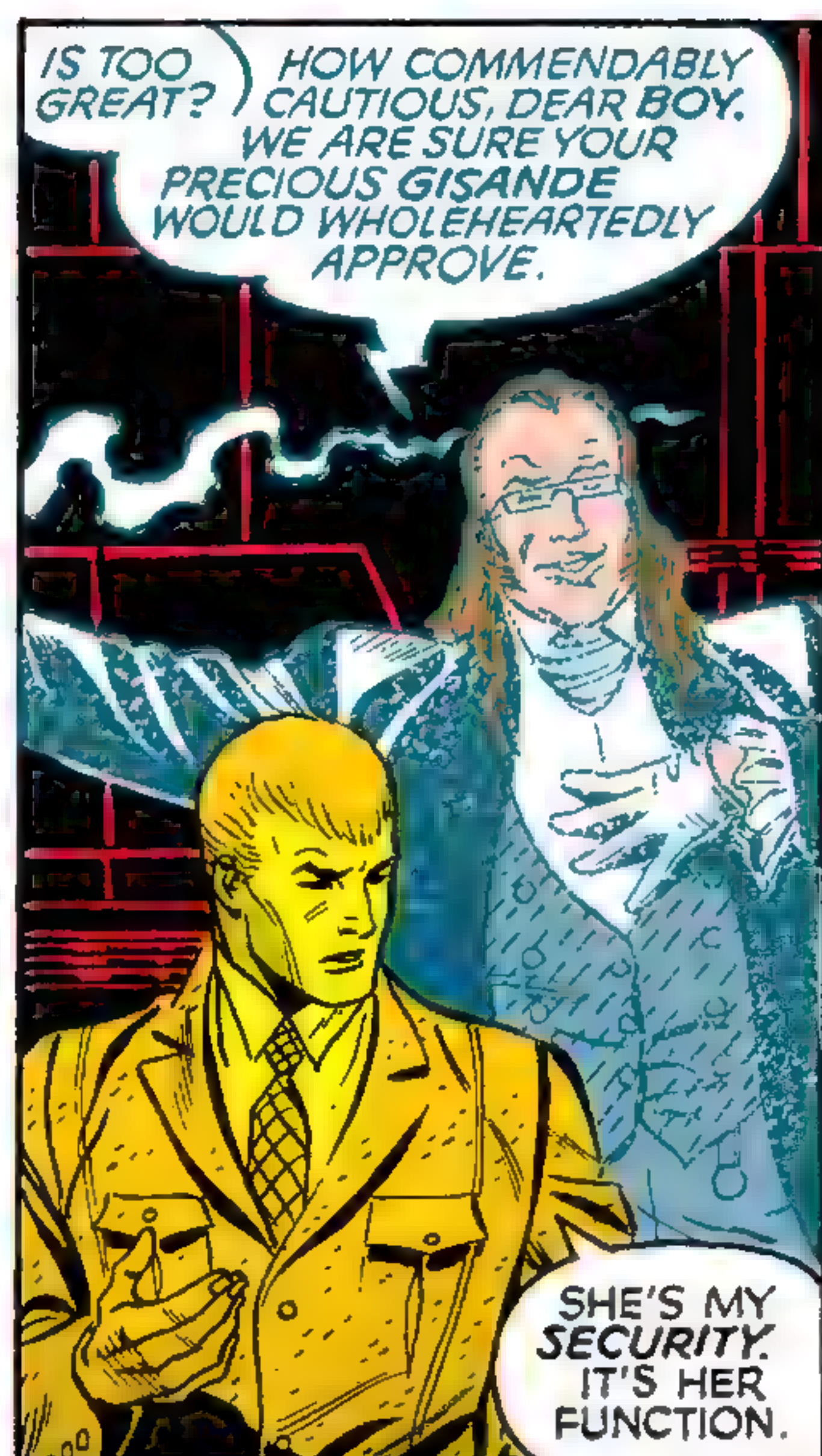
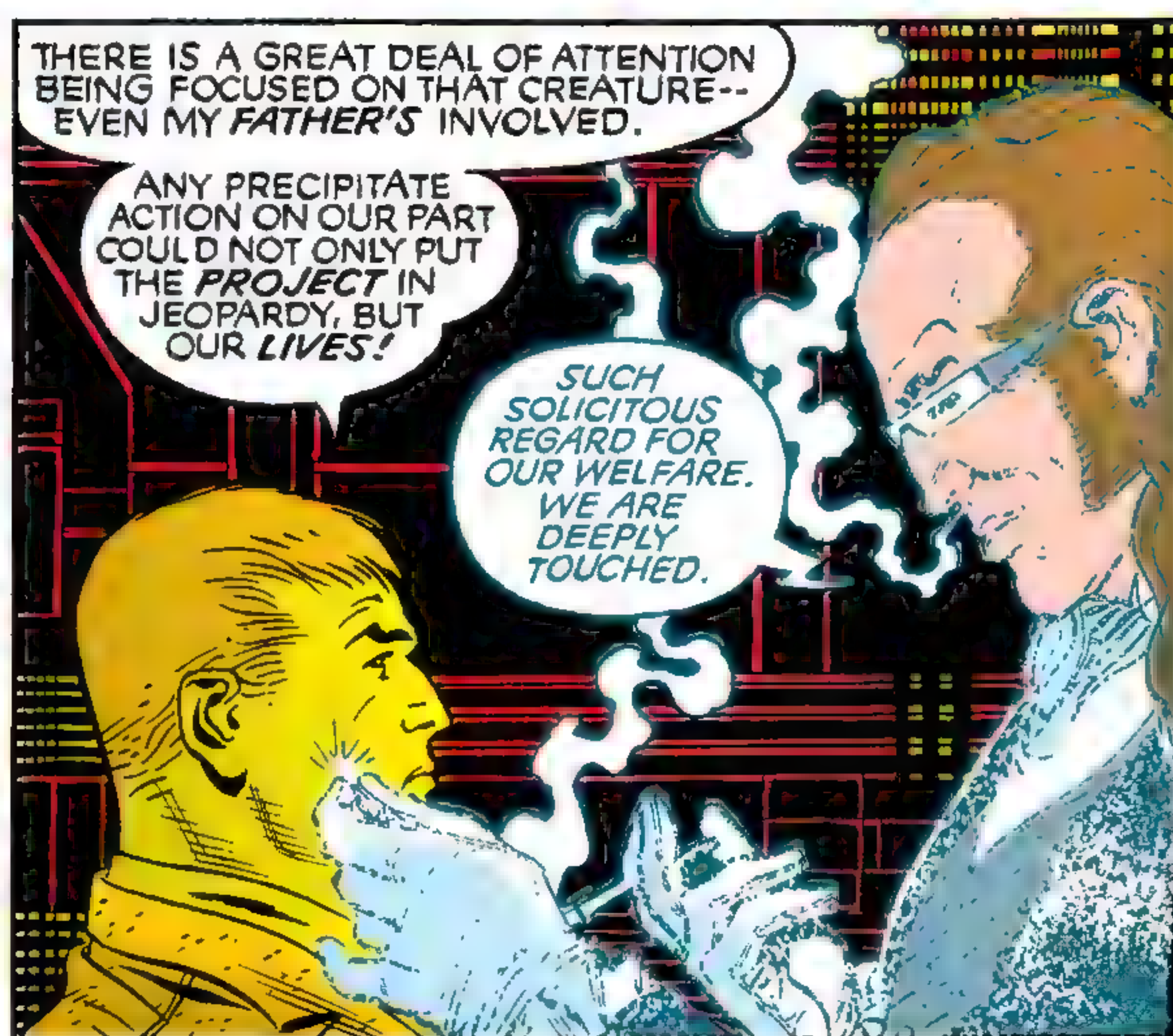
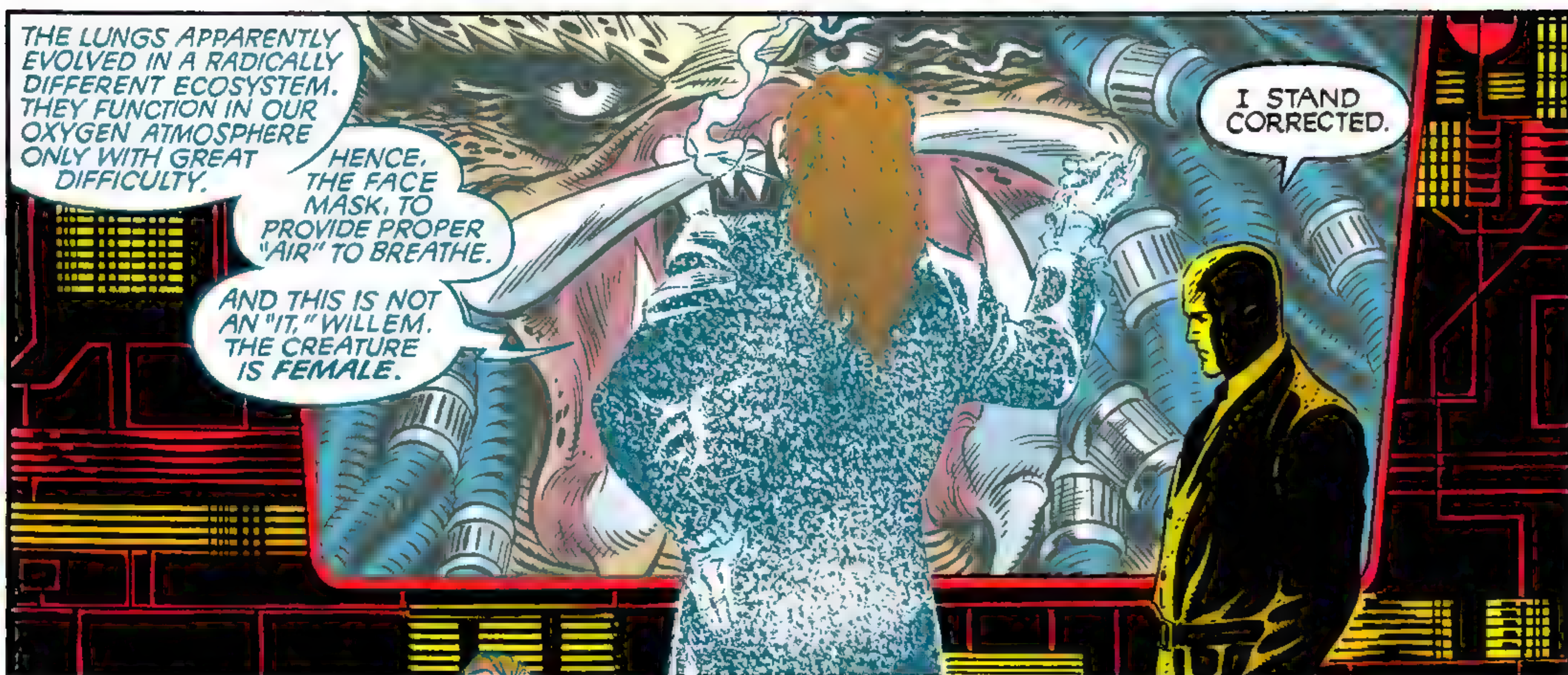


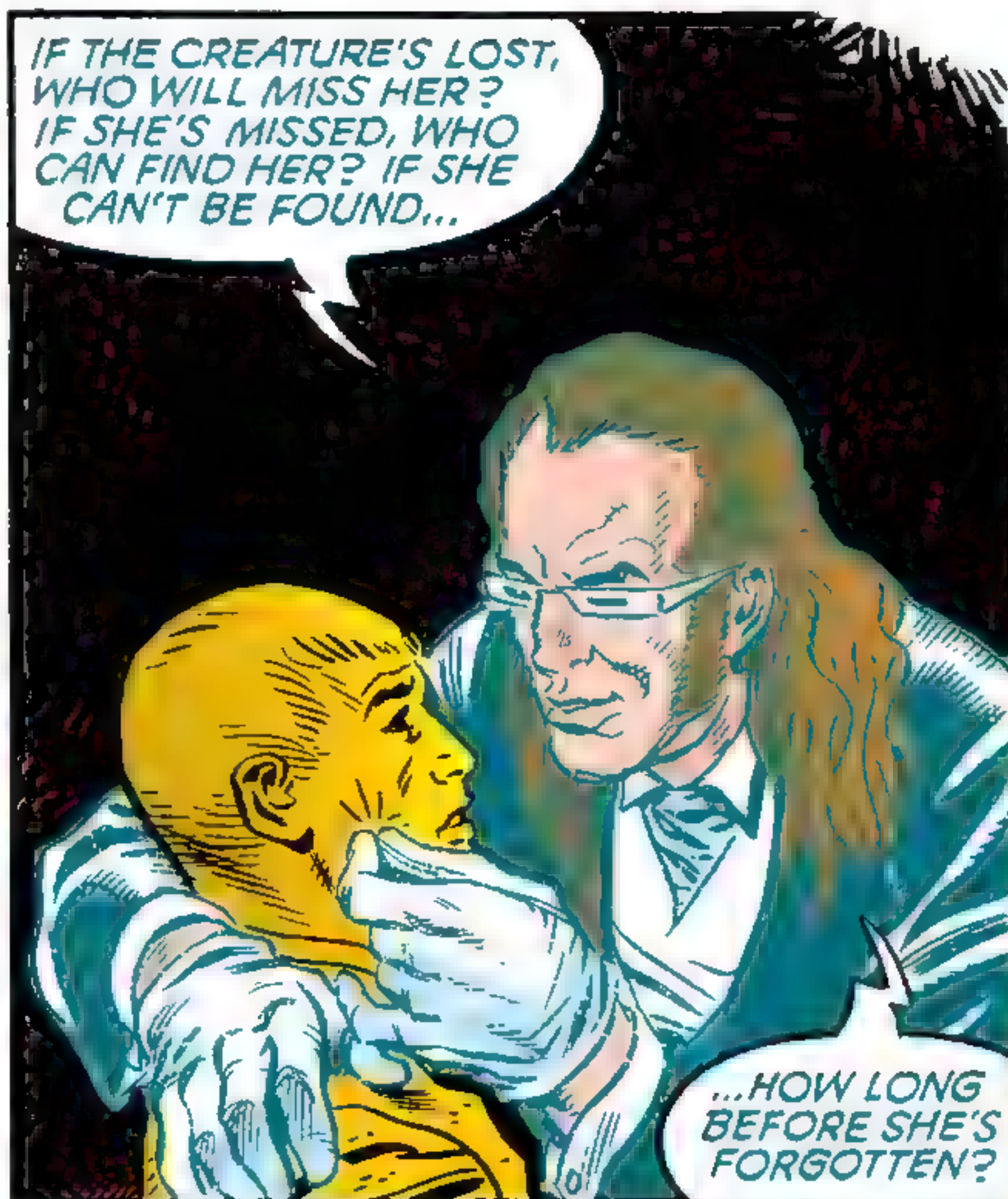
A GREAT DEAL-- OF
HUMAN KNOWLEDGE,
OF OUR HISTORY-- WAS
LOST WHEN THE
ALIENS OVERRAN
THE PLANET.

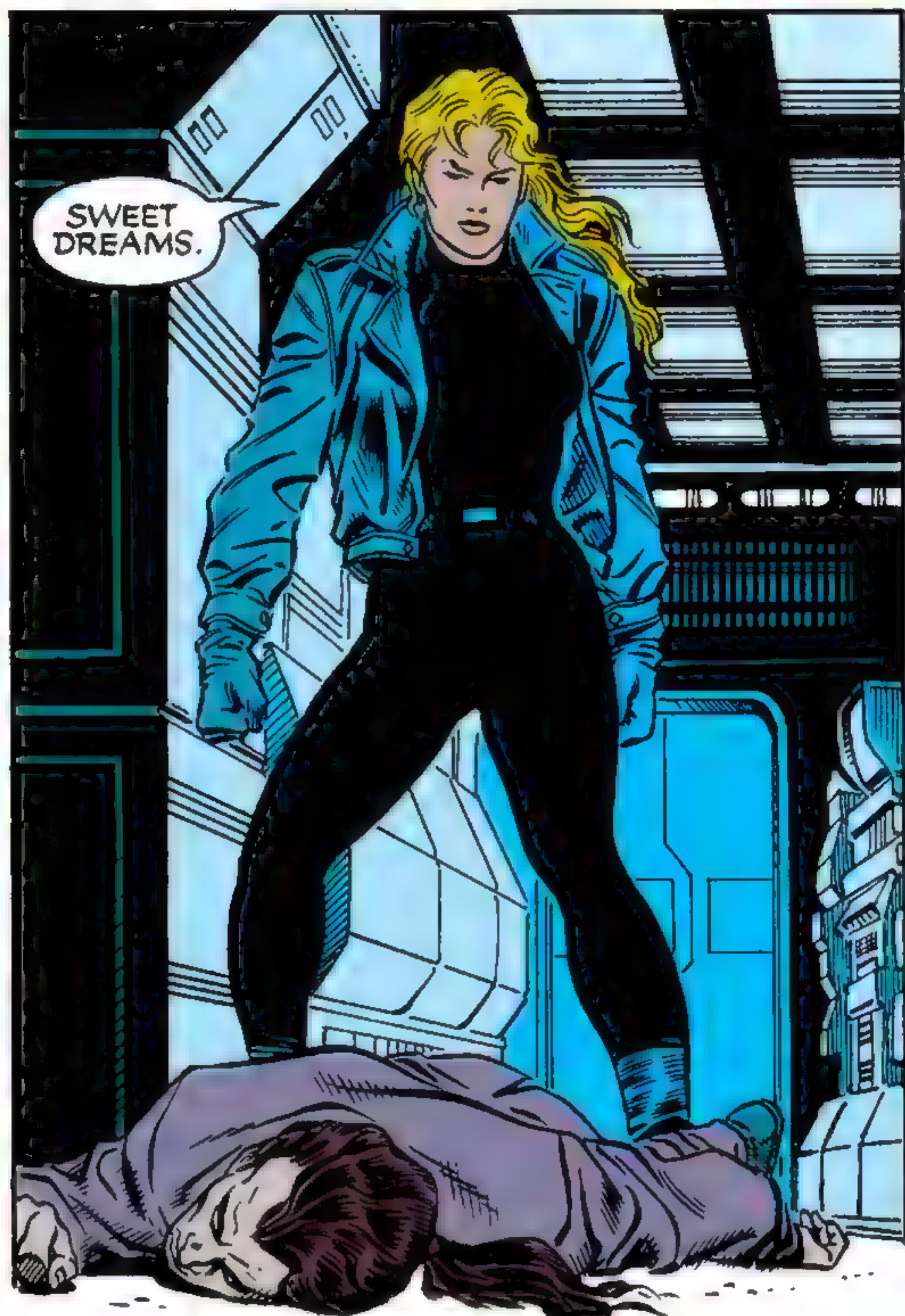
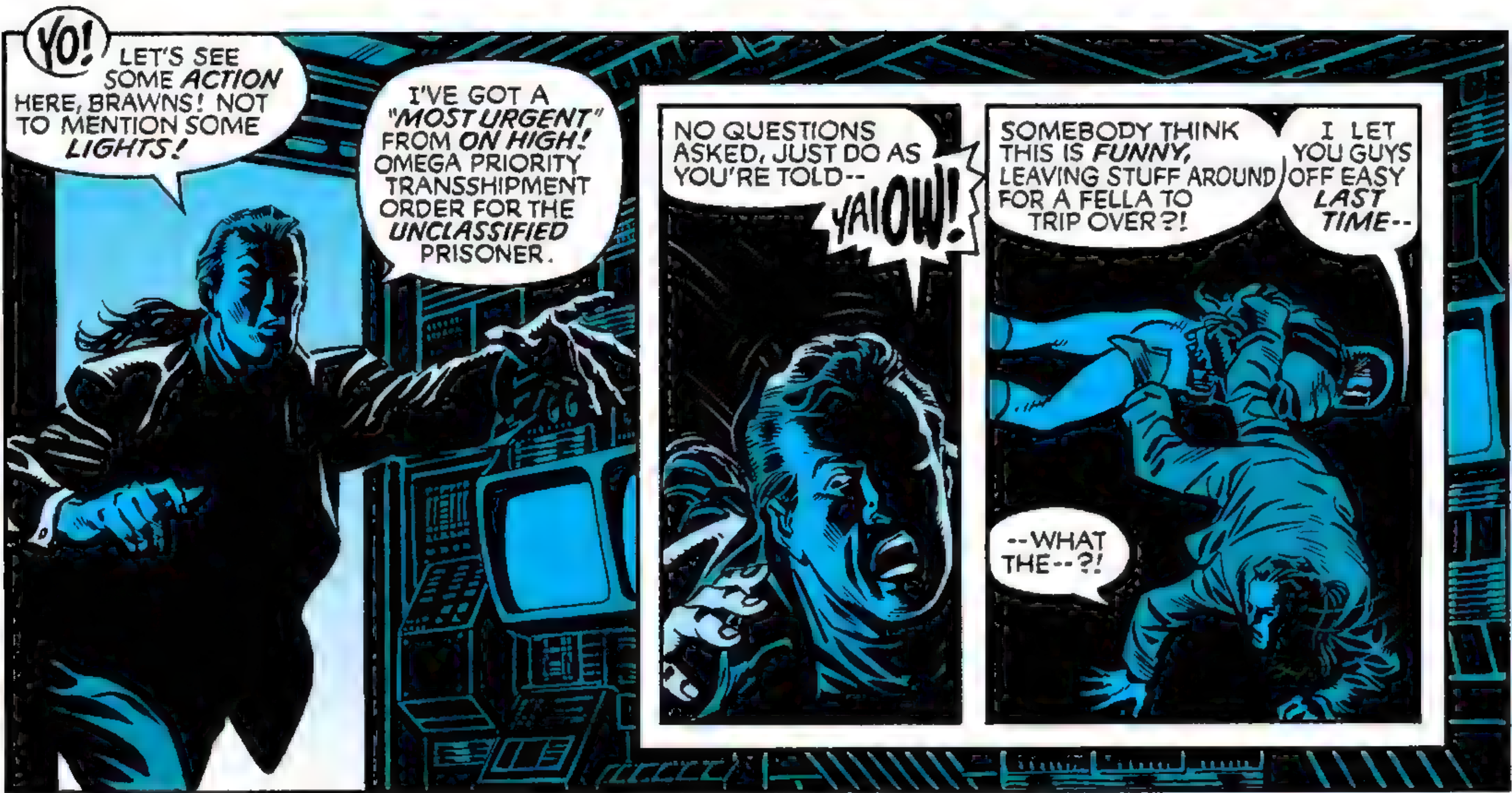
WE MUST
MAKE DO
WITH WHAT
REMAINS.



WHY IS IT
BREATHING
SO HARD?
CAN YOU AT
LEAST TELL
ME THAT?









I OUGHT TO HAVE MY SKULL POPPED, DeMEDICI-- THE THINGS I LET YOU BROWBEAT ME INTO.

NICE TALK.

I GOT INSTINCTS, SHIROW-- IS THAT A CRIME?

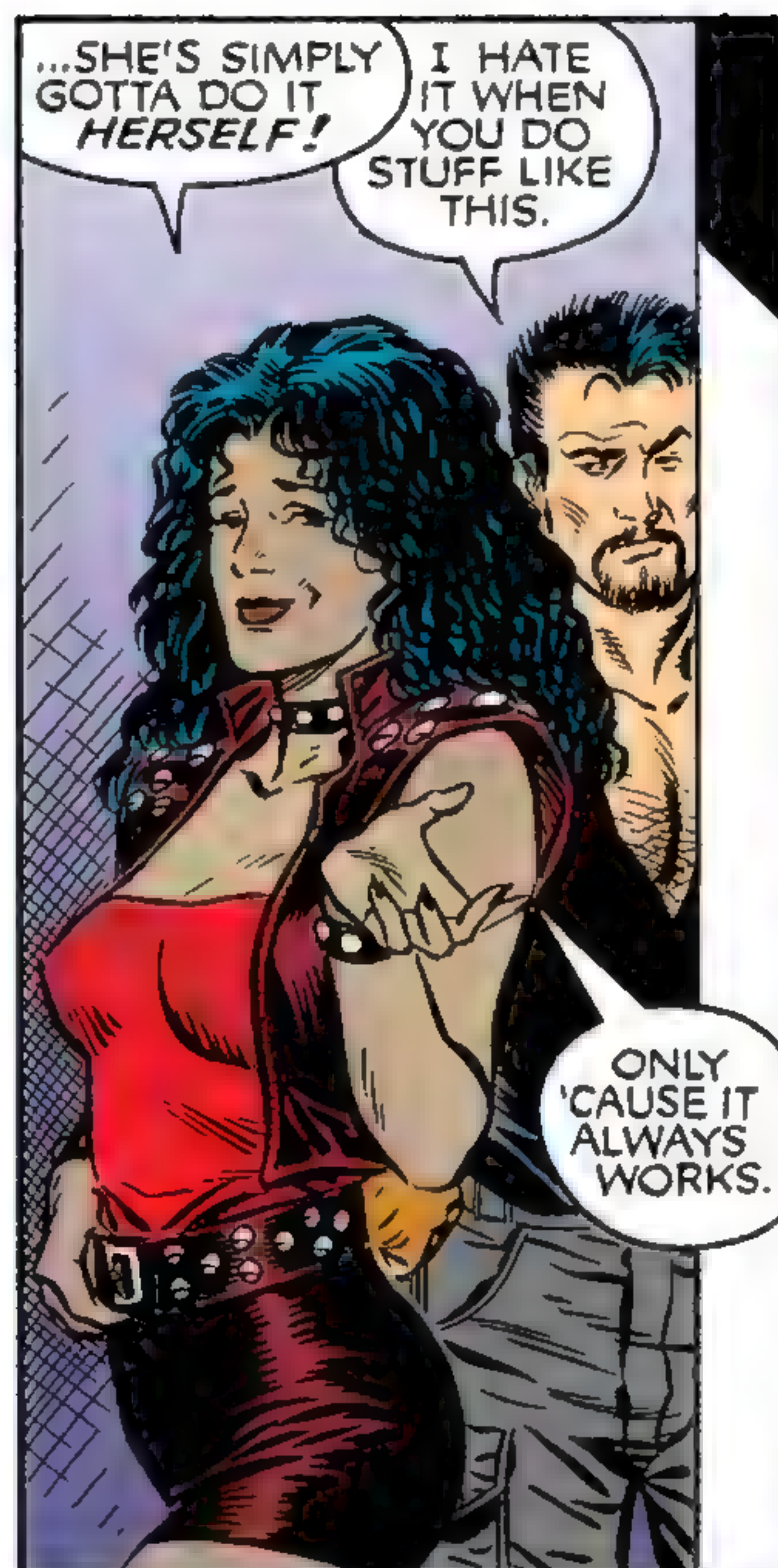
YOU'RE JUST CRABBY 'CAUSE YOU CAN'T PICK THE LOCK.



YOU THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER, DeMEDICI?

JEEZ LOU-EEZ! SHOULD'A KNOWN FROM THE START-- A GIRL WANTS A THING DONE RIGHT...

Kick!



...SHE'S SIMPLY GOTTA DO IT HERSELF!

I HATE IT WHEN YOU DO STUFF LIKE THIS.

ONLY 'CAUSE IT ALWAYS WORKS.



HEY, IS IT MY FAULT YOU NEVER STAY CURRENT WITH THE LITERATURE?

SCORE ONE FOR INSTINCTS.

SOMEONE WAS IN A FIGHT HERE.

WHICH WOULD EXPLAIN WHY MS. SALAZAR HASN'T BEEN ANSWERING OUR CALLS.

LIVING ROOM'S CLEAR.



YOU SAID SHE JUST DIDN'T LIKE US.

SHE DOESN'T.

TOMMY-- NEXT DOOR!



IF IT'S HER, YOU THINK SHE'LL APPRECIATE OUR COMING TO HER RESCUE?

ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT.

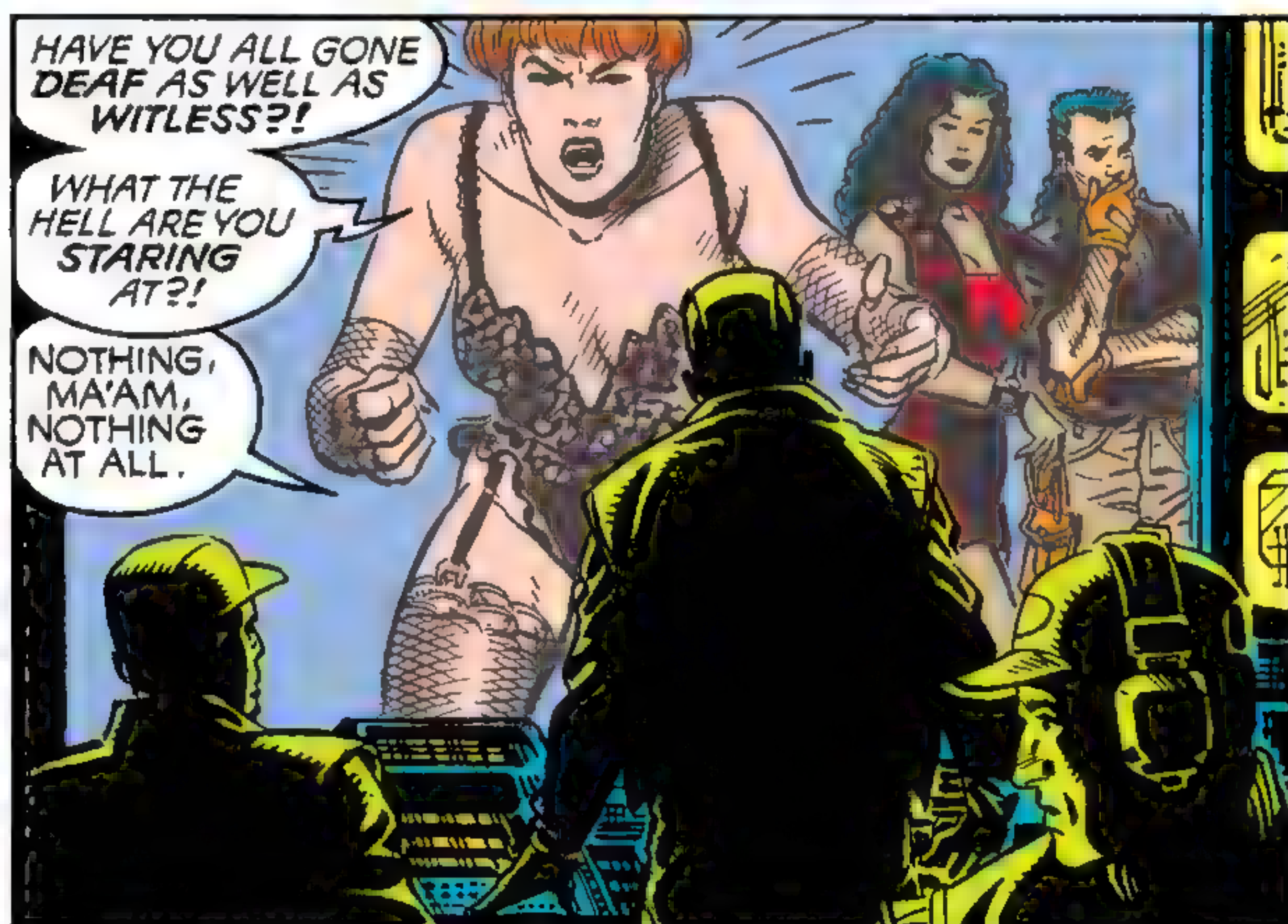
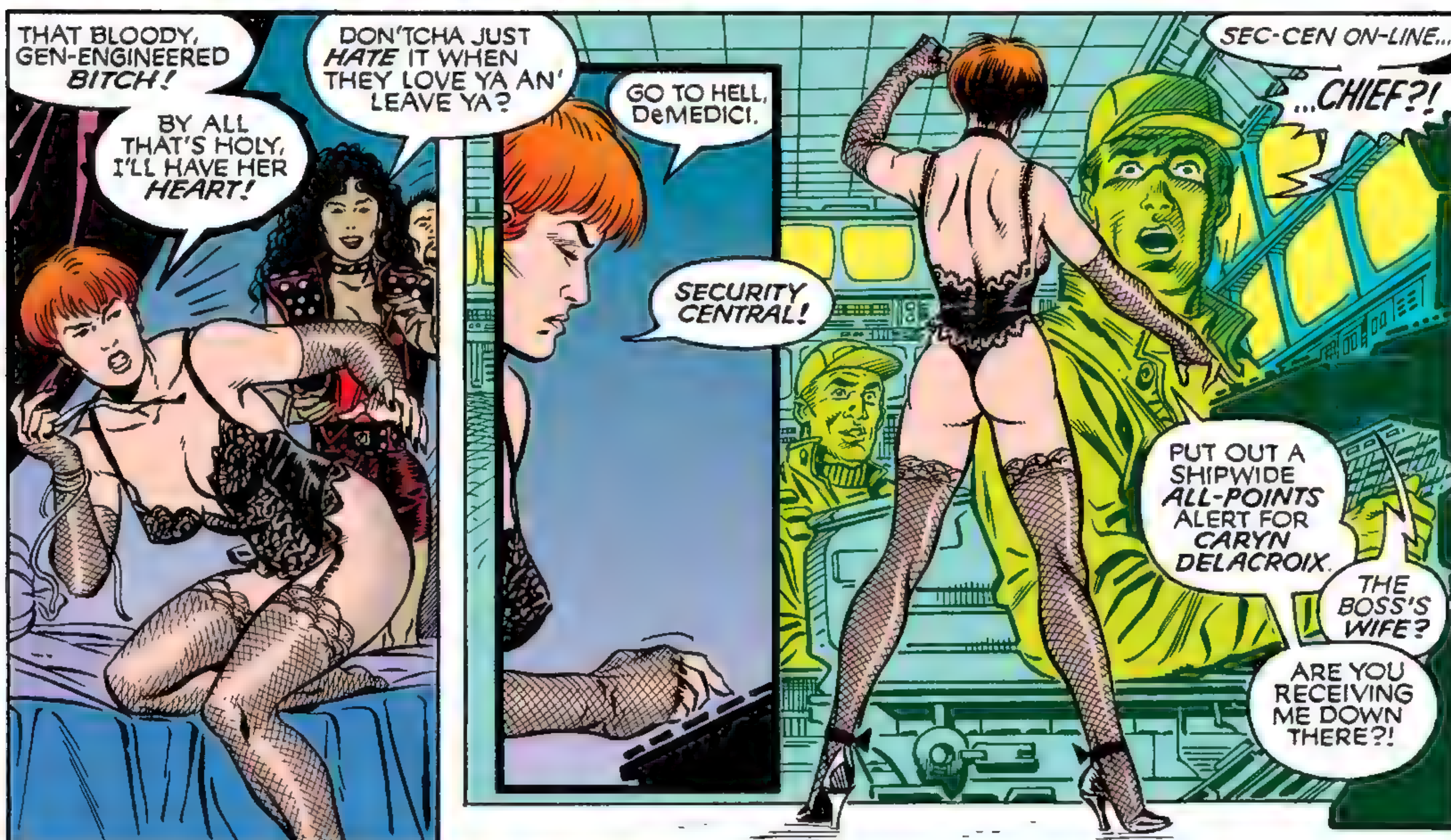
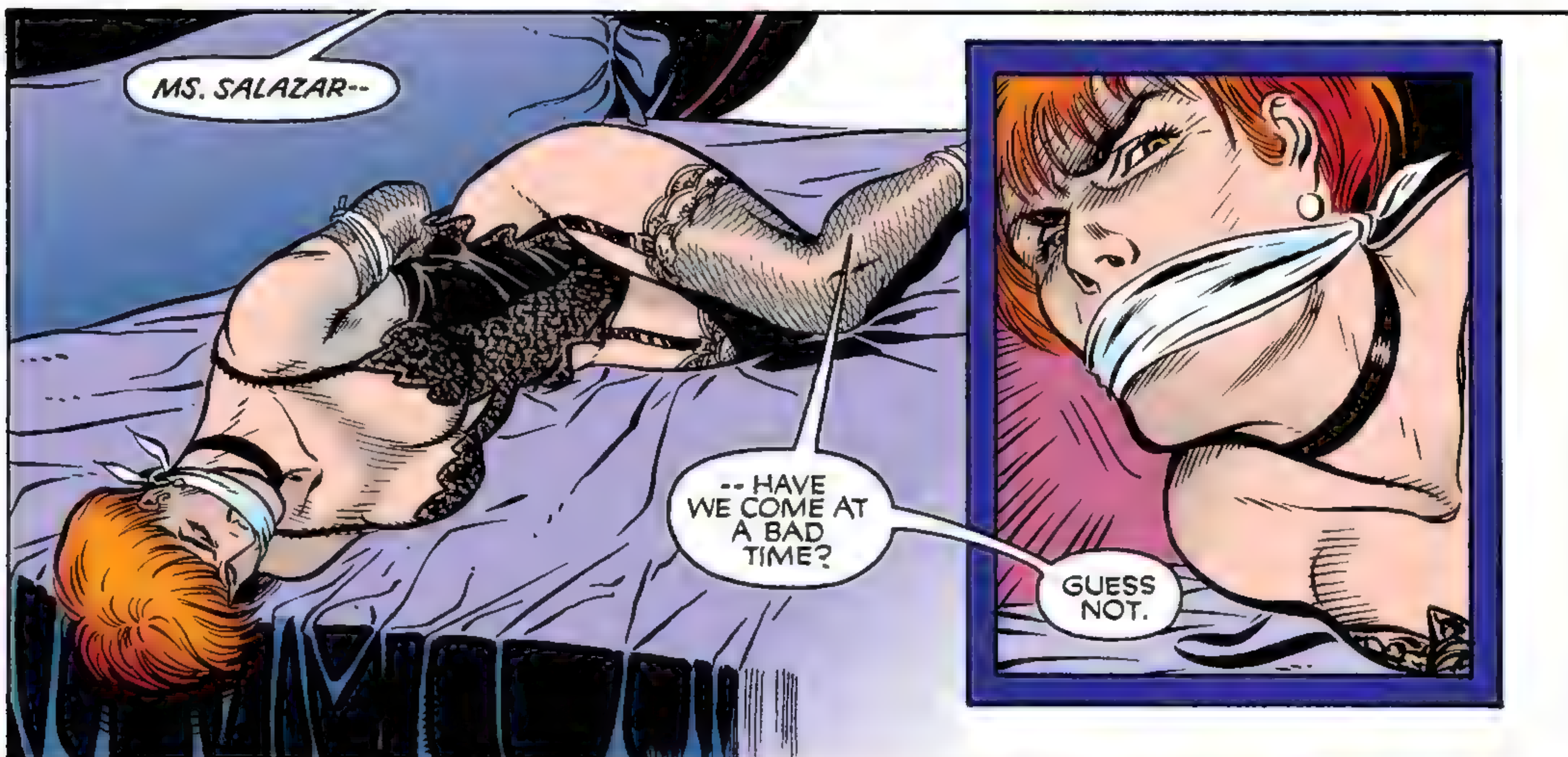
WHAT D'YOU SEE?

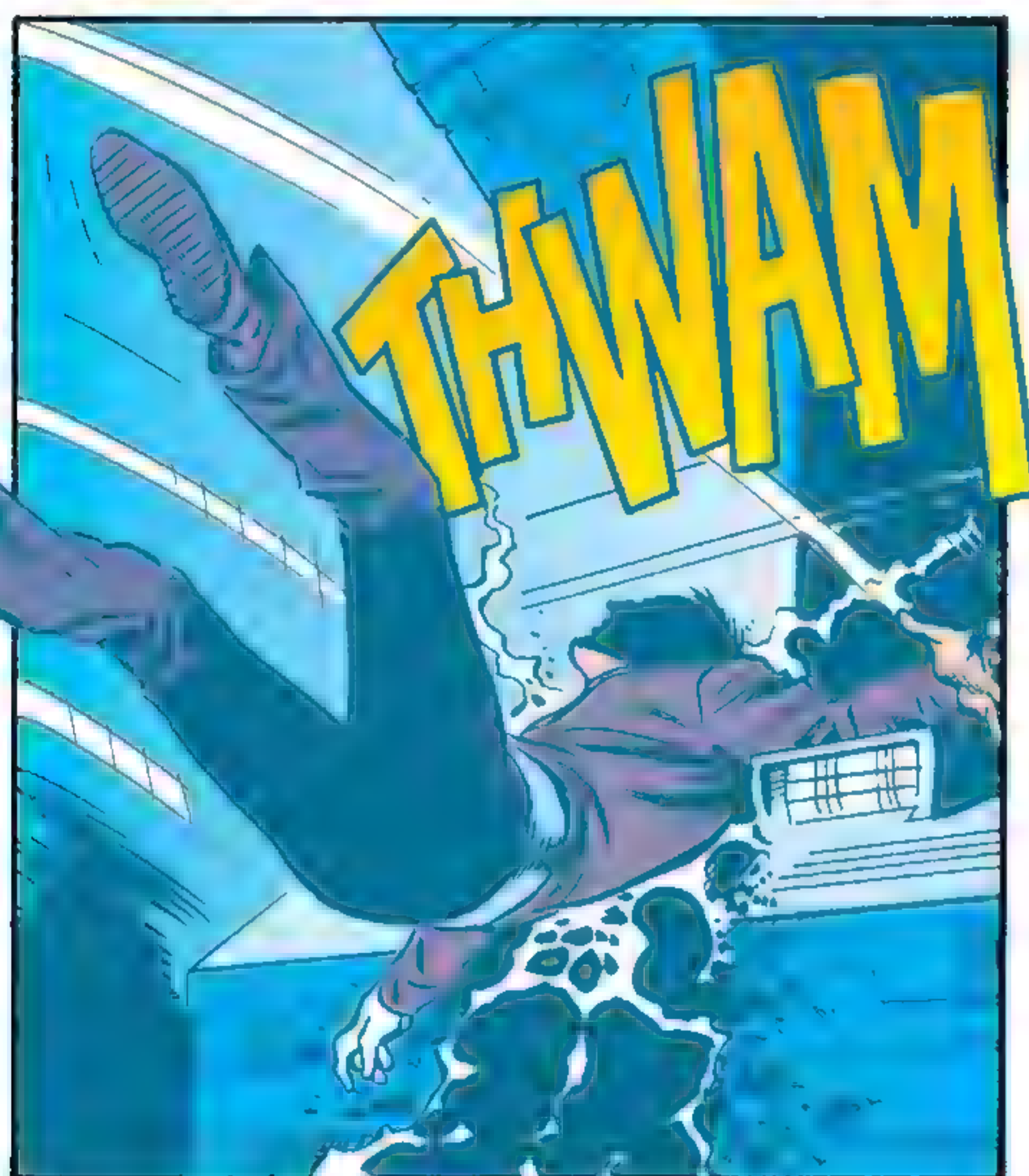
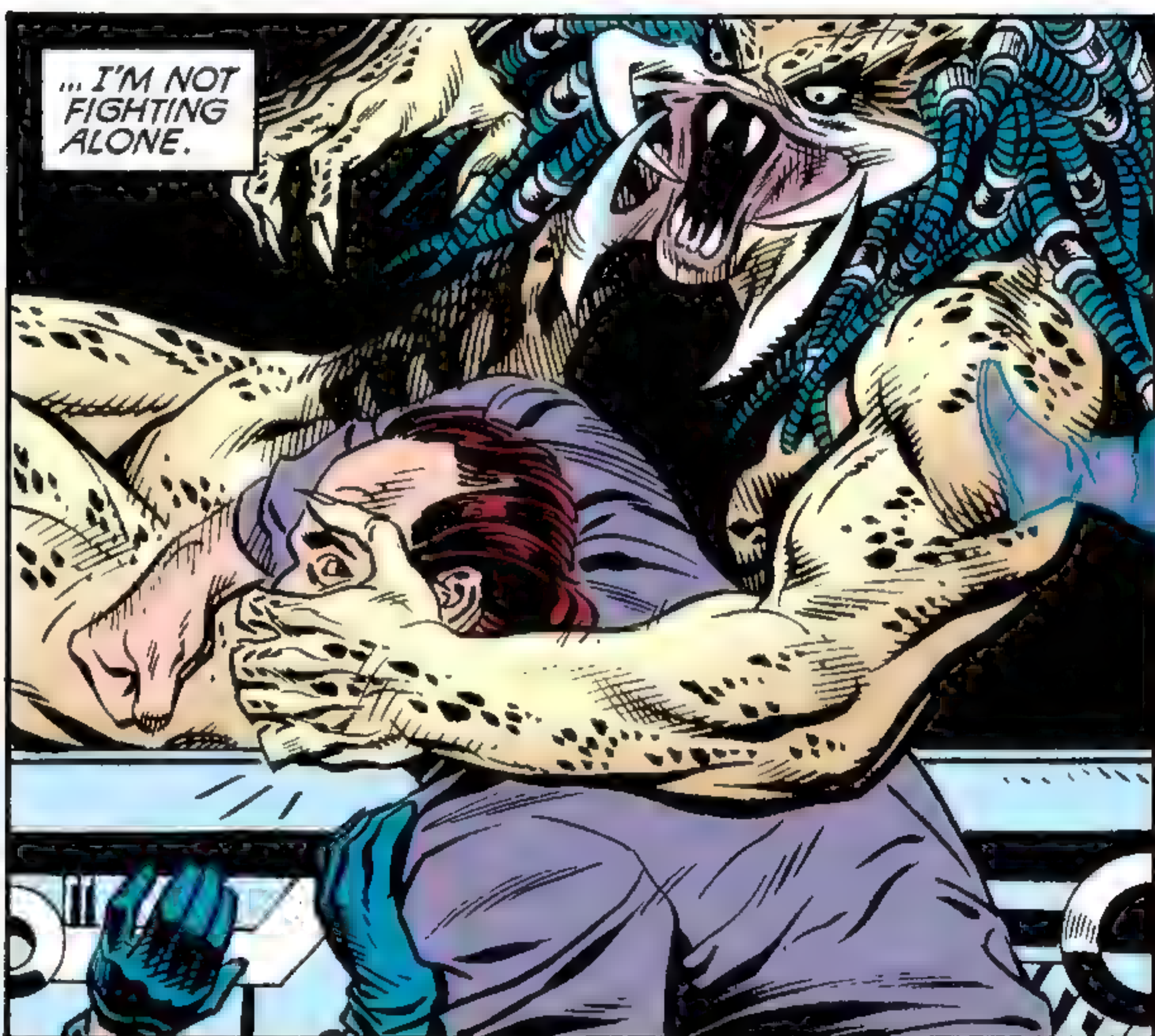


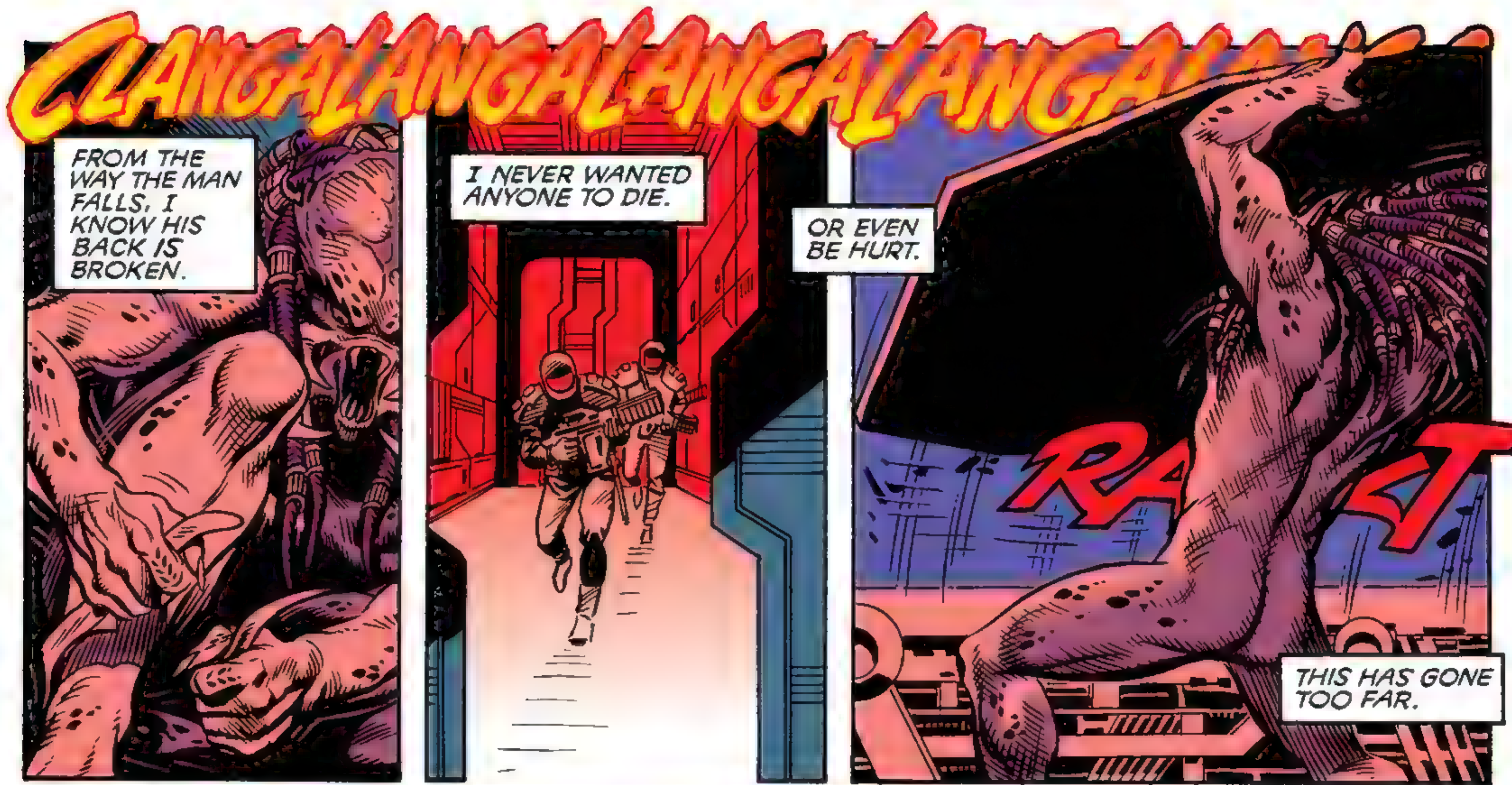
Oh, TOMMY--

--oh, TOMMY--

--WE'RE DOOMED!







FROM THE WAY THE MAN FALLS, I KNOW HIS BACK IS BROKEN.

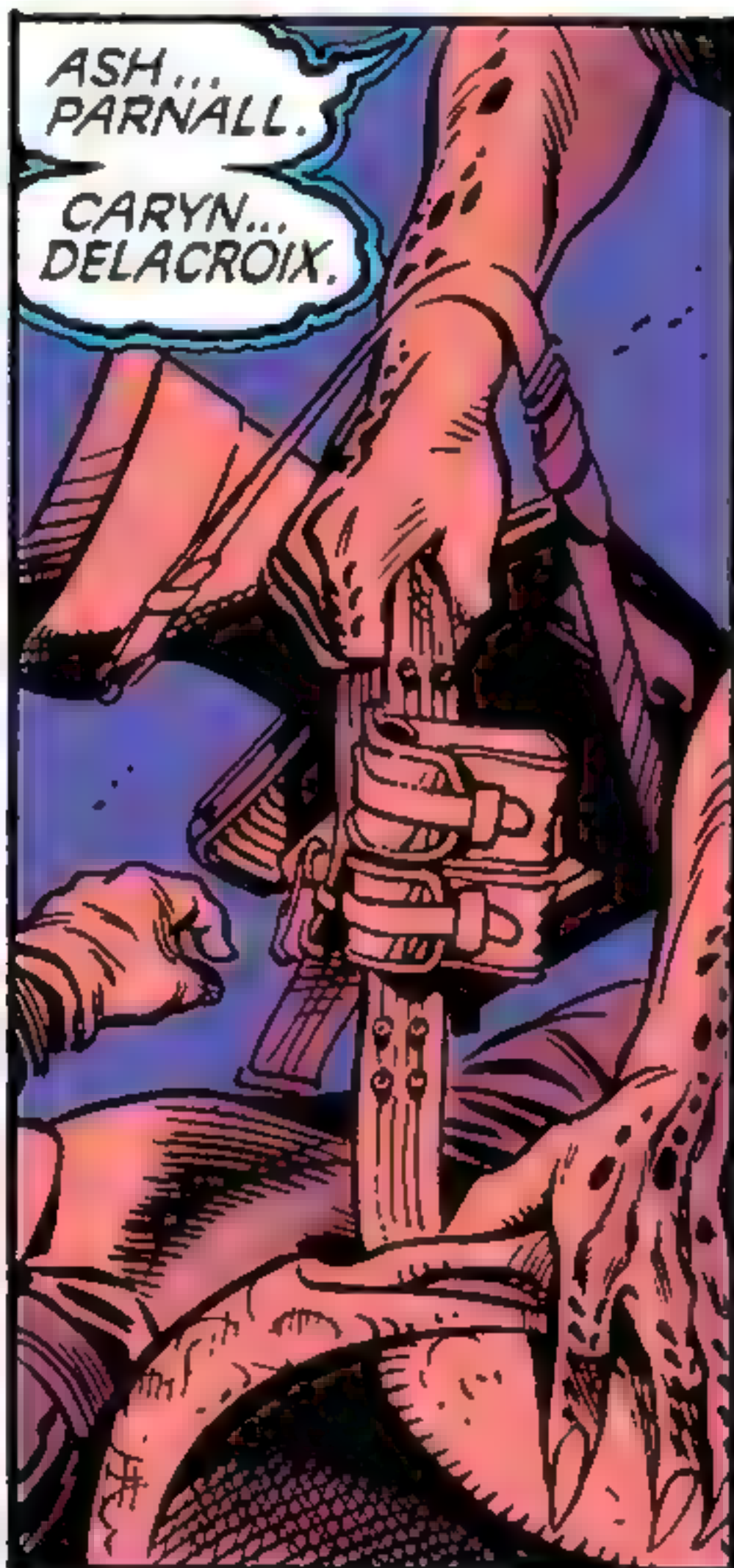
I NEVER WANTED ANYONE TO DIE.

OR EVEN BE HURT.

THIS HAS GONE TOO FAR.



BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW TO STOP IT.



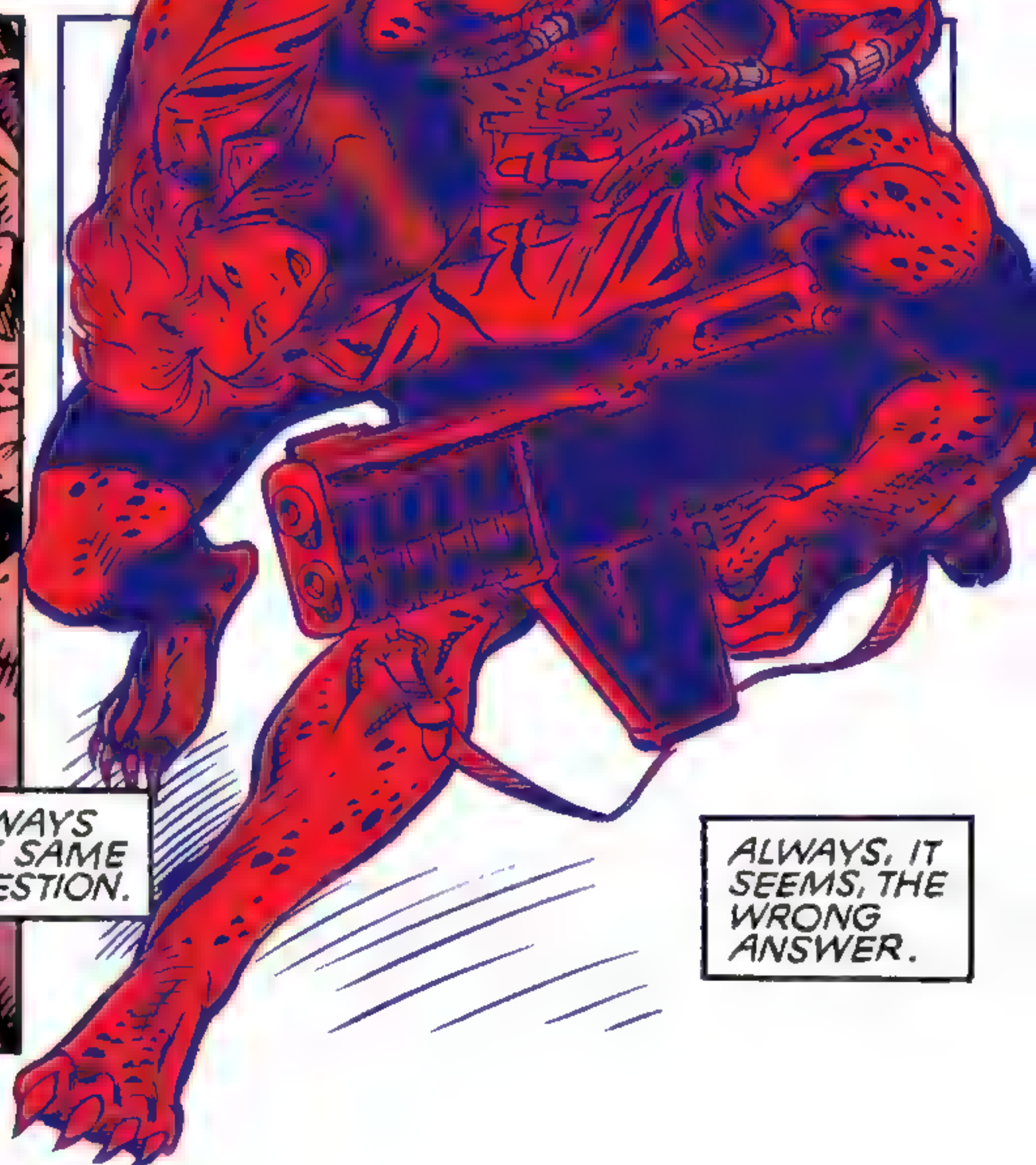
ASH... PARNALL.
CARYN... DELACROIX.



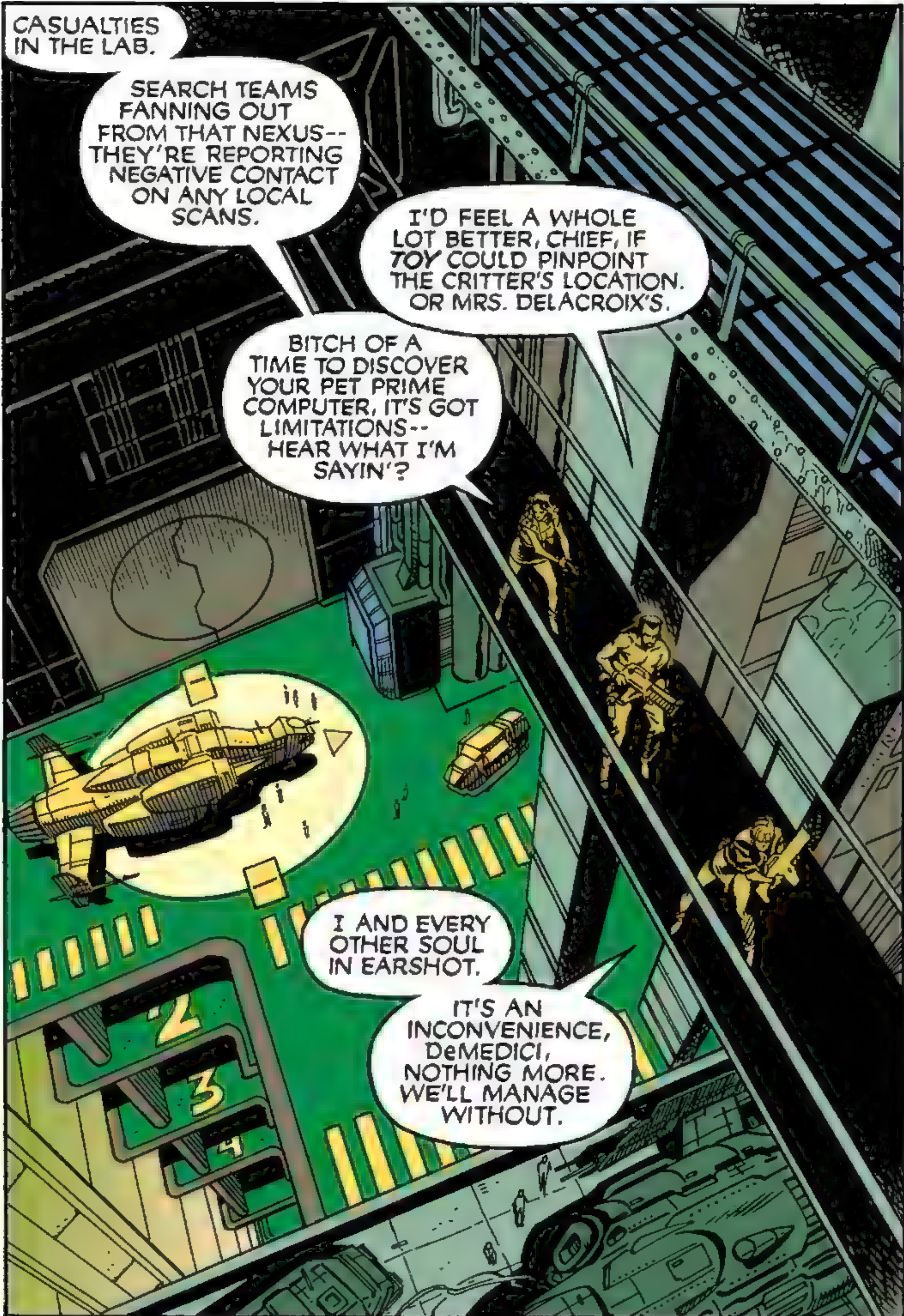
WHO THE HELL... ARE YOU?!

I... I...
...DON'T KNOW!

ALWAYS THE SAME QUESTION.



ALWAYS, IT SEEMS, THE WRONG ANSWER.



CASUALTIES
IN THE LAB.

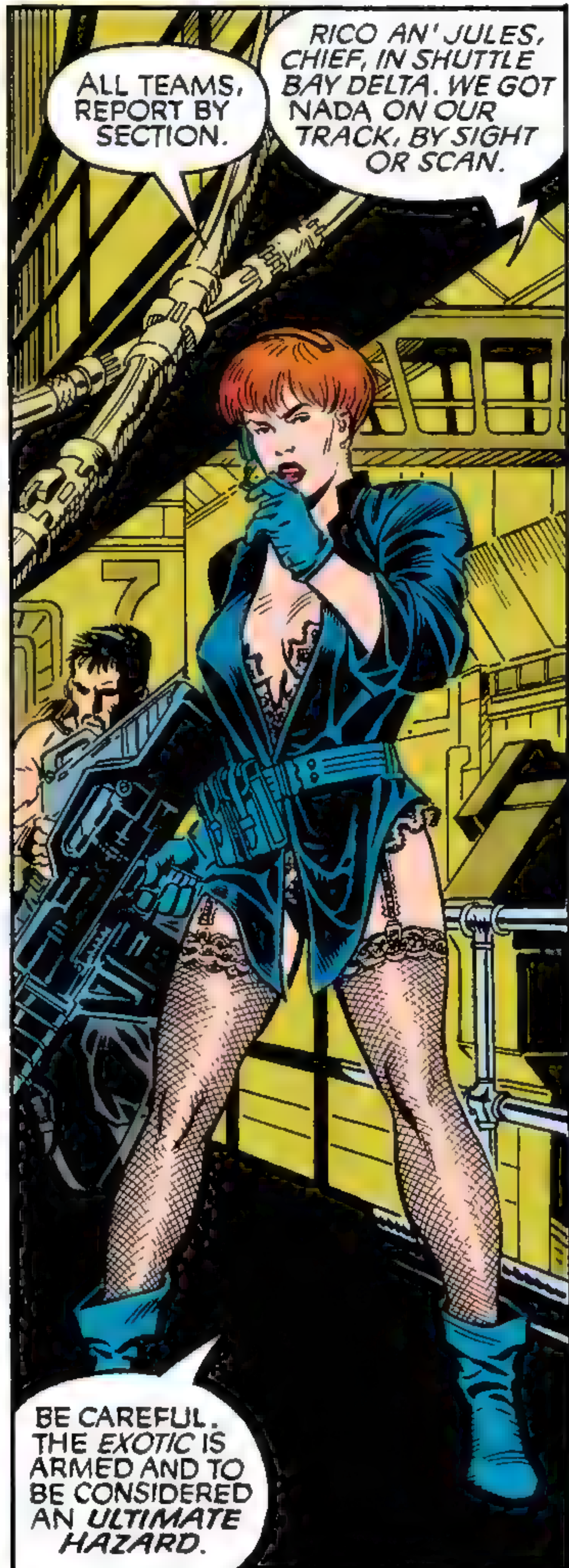
SEARCH TEAMS
FANNING OUT
FROM THAT NEXUS--
THEY'RE REPORTING
NEGATIVE CONTACT
ON ANY LOCAL
SCANS.

I'D FEEL A WHOLE
LOT BETTER, CHIEF, IF
TOY COULD PINPOINT
THE CRITTER'S LOCATION.
OR MRS. DELACROIX'S.

BITCH OF A
TIME TO DISCOVER
YOUR PET PRIME
COMPUTER, IT'S GOT
LIMITATIONS--
HEAR WHAT I'M
SAYIN'?

I AND EVERY
OTHER SOUL
IN EARSHOT.

IT'S AN
INCONVENIENCE,
DEMEDICI,
NOTHING MORE.
WE'LL MANAGE
WITHOUT.



ALL TEAMS,
REPORT BY
SECTION.

RICO AN' JULES,
CHIEF, IN SHUTTLE
BAY DELTA. WE GOT
NADA ON OUR
TRACK, BY SIGHT
OR SCAN.

BE CAREFUL.
THE EXOTIC IS
ARMED AND TO
BE CONSIDERED
AN **ULTIMATE**
HAZARD.



"ULTIMATE,"
MY KEISTER.
ONLY **BUGS**'RE
THAT NASTY,
AN' WE NAILED
OUR SHARE O'
THEM JUS'
FINE.

BUT SPEAKIN'
O' "FINE"--YOU
HEAR WHAT'S
TALKIN' AT
SECURITY
CENTRAL,
RICO?

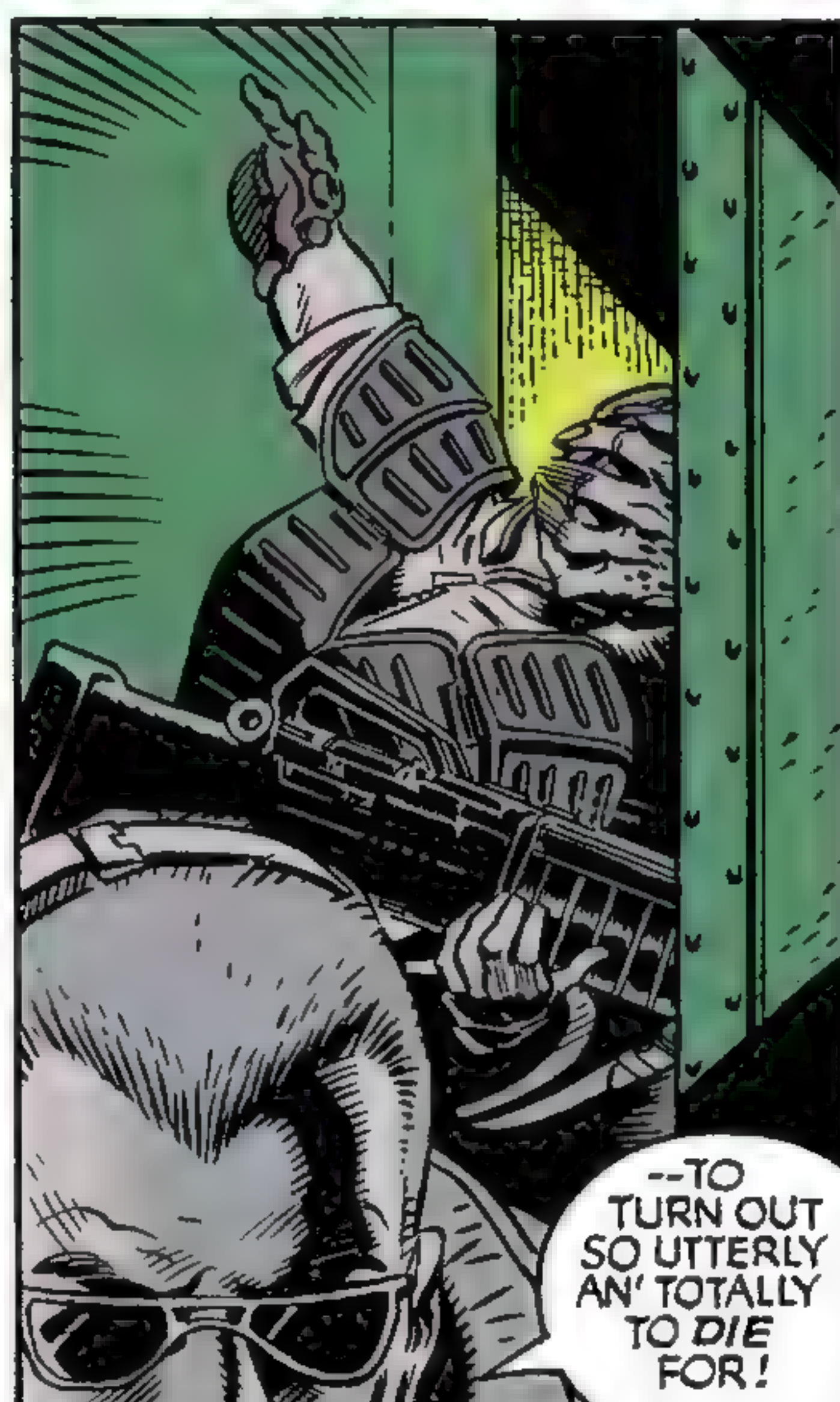
OUR BOSS
BITCH,
LOOKIN' SO
RIGHT, SO
RUDE, SO
WICKED.



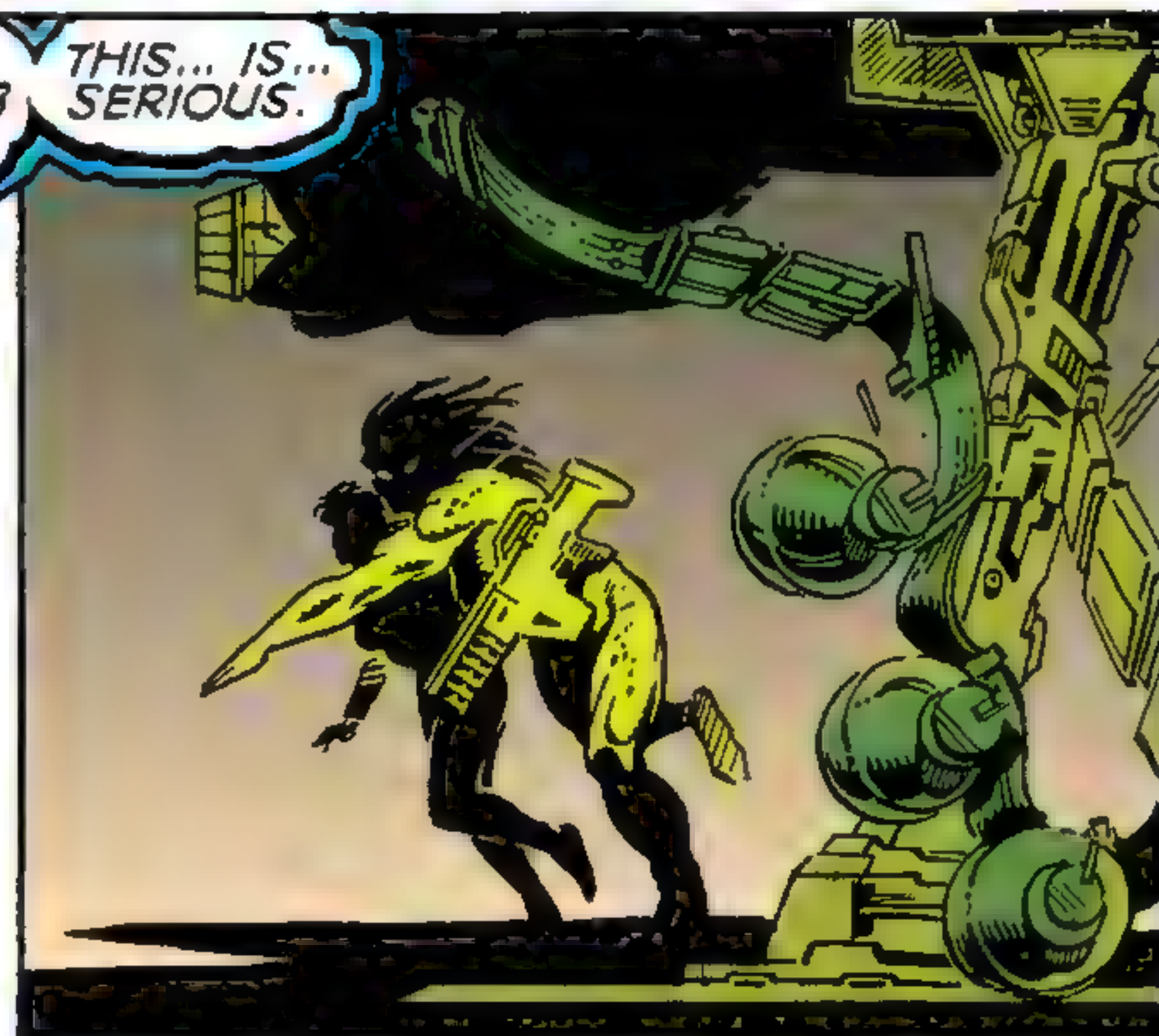
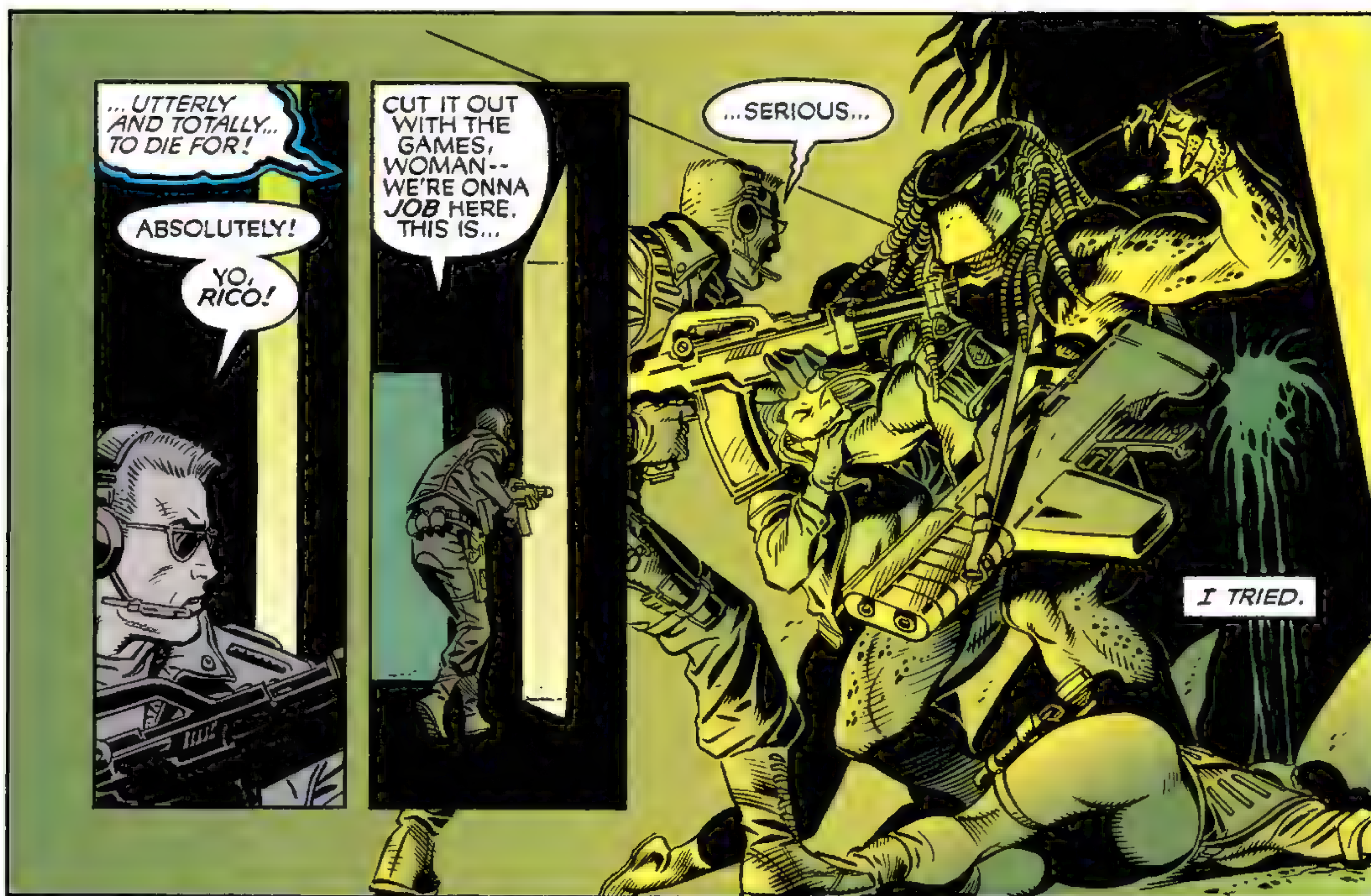
AN' BEST OF ALL, THOSE
REMF LAMES GOT HER
ON TAPE!

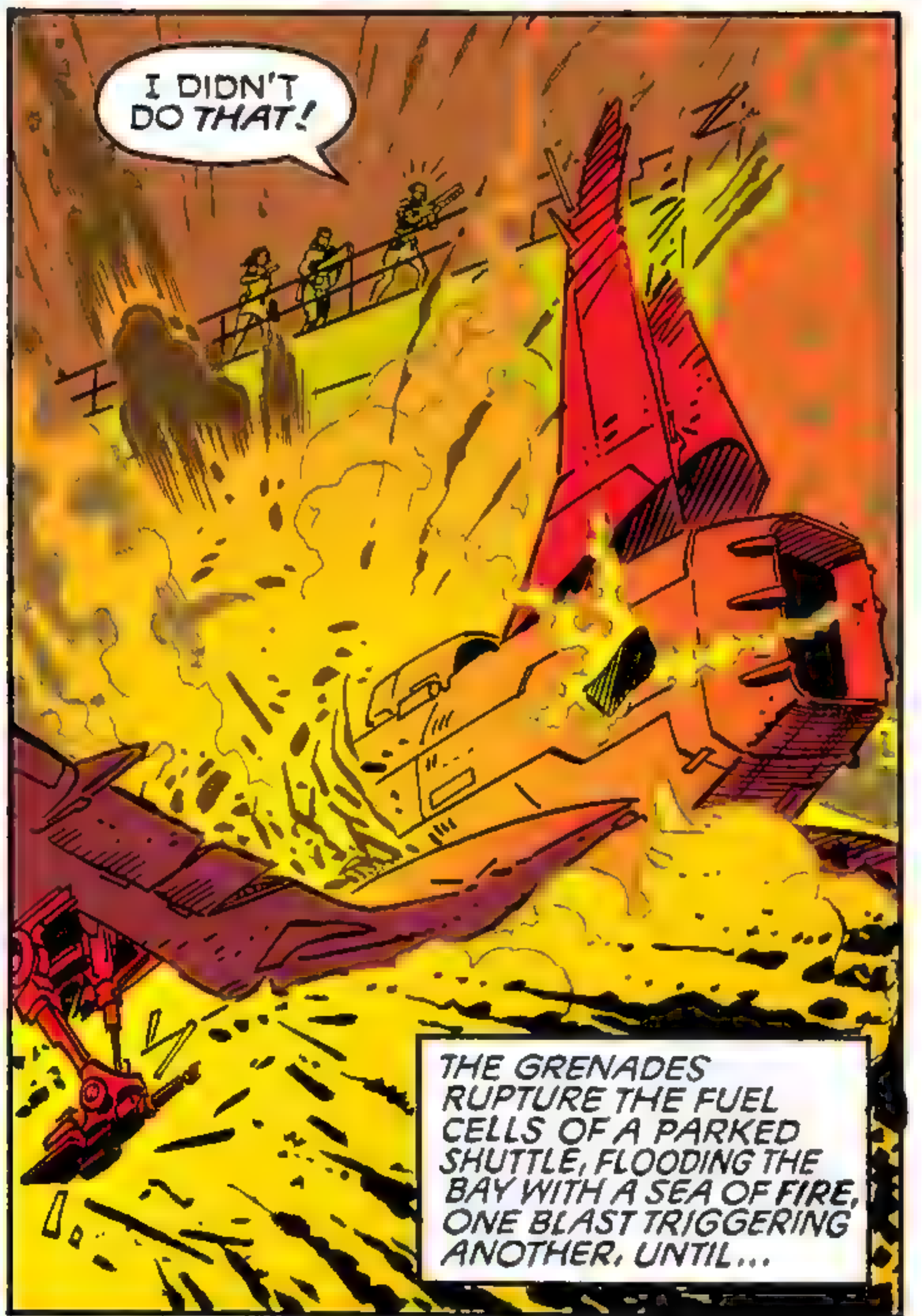
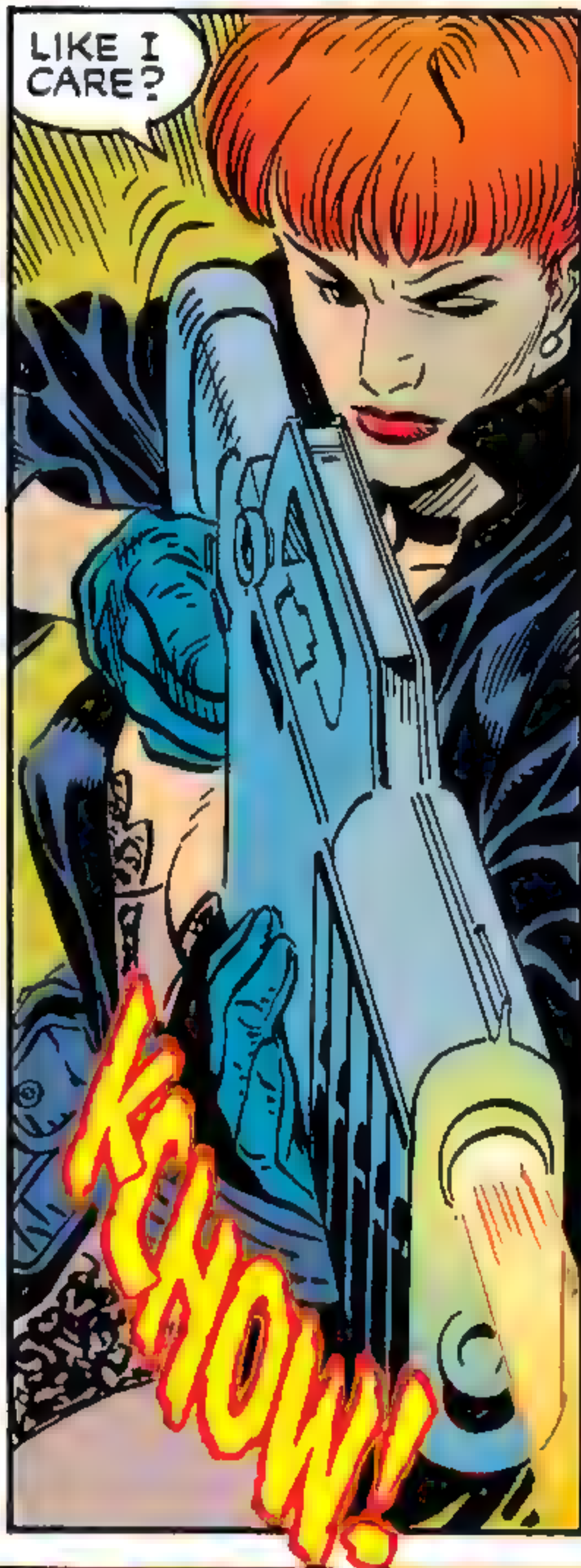
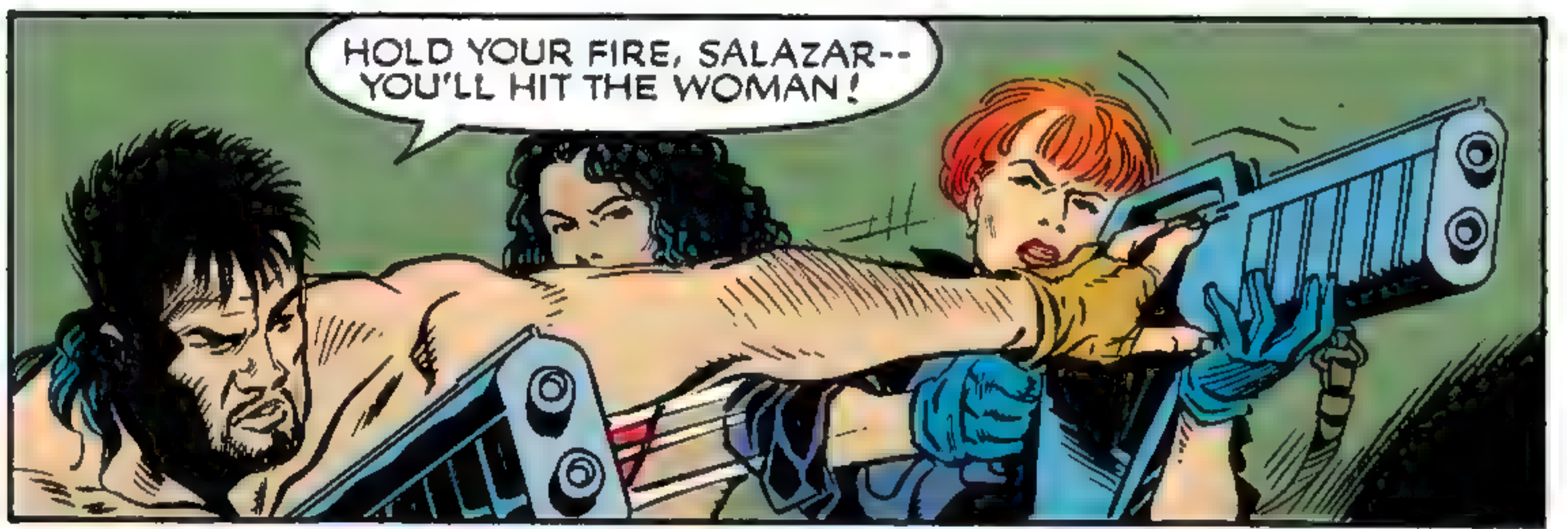
TRUST ME,
PARTNER,
I PUT IN
AN ORDER
FOR YOU,
TOO.

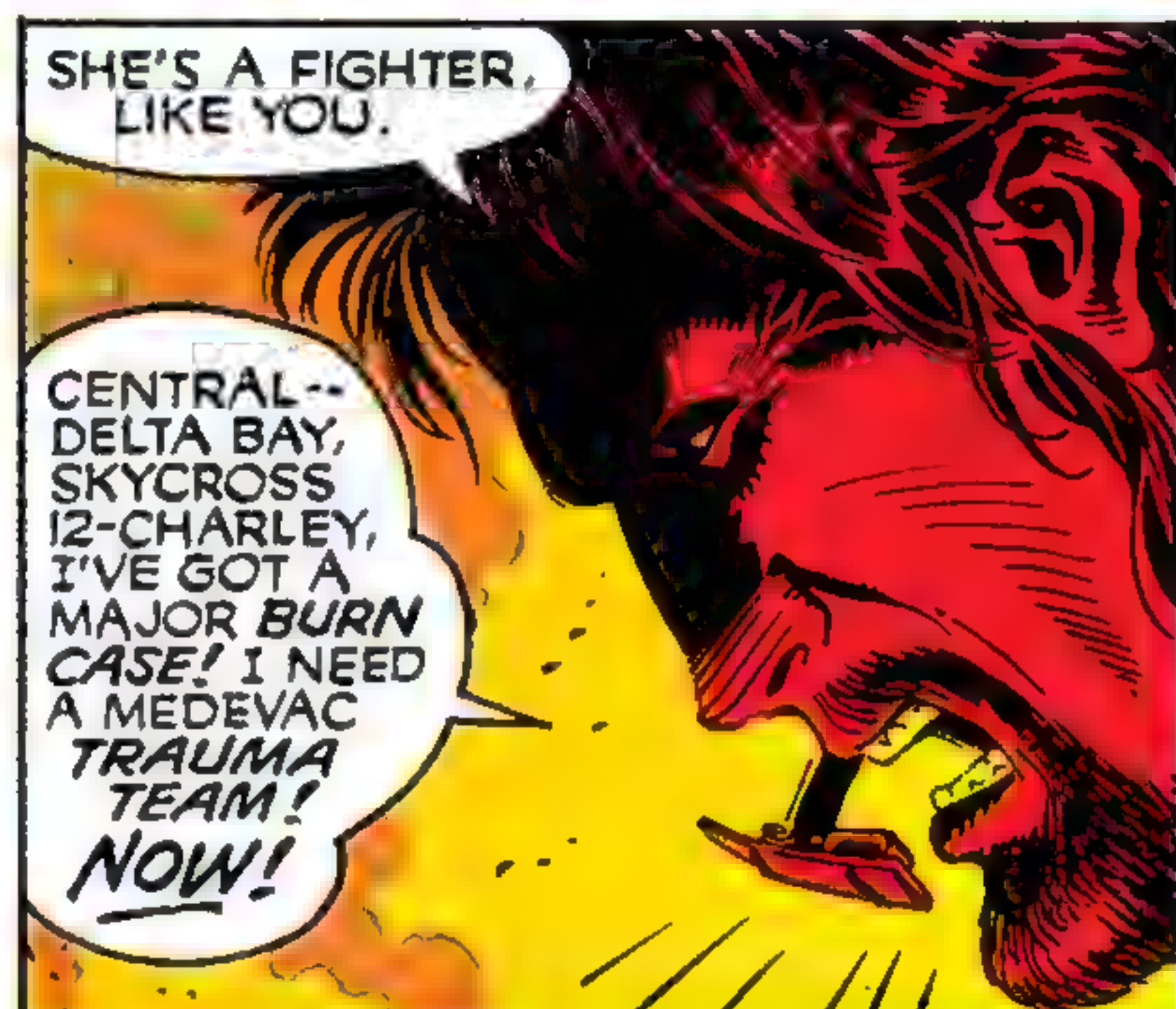
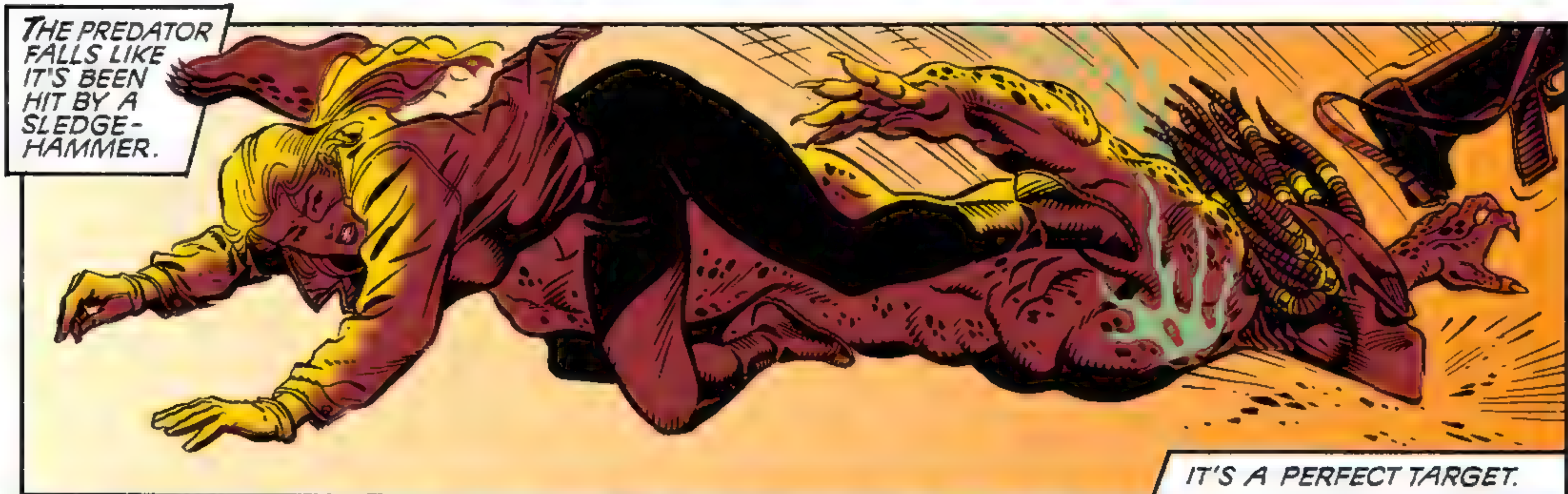
I MEAN,
WHO'D'A THOUGHT
THE "ICE QUEEN"
HAD IT IN HER--

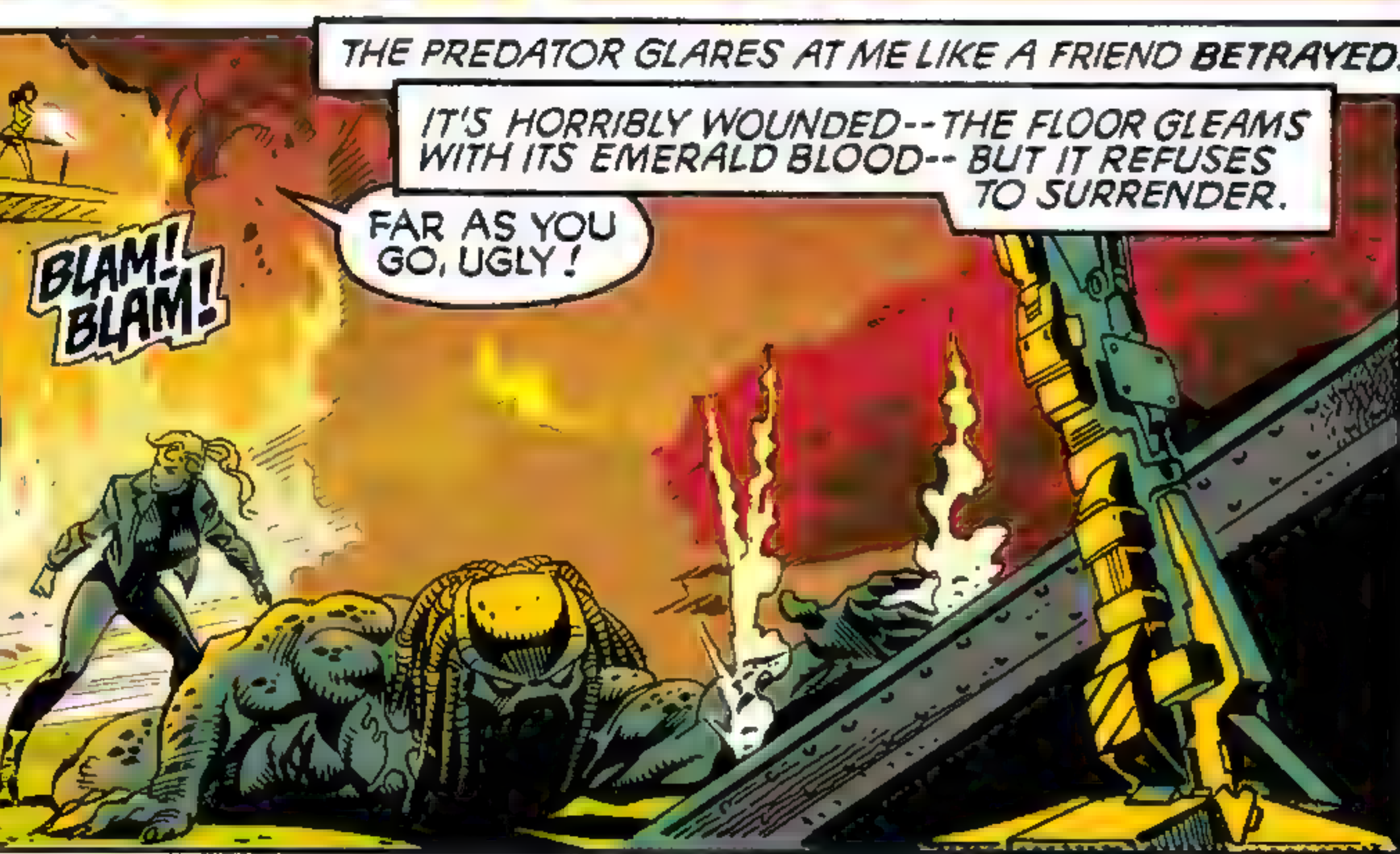
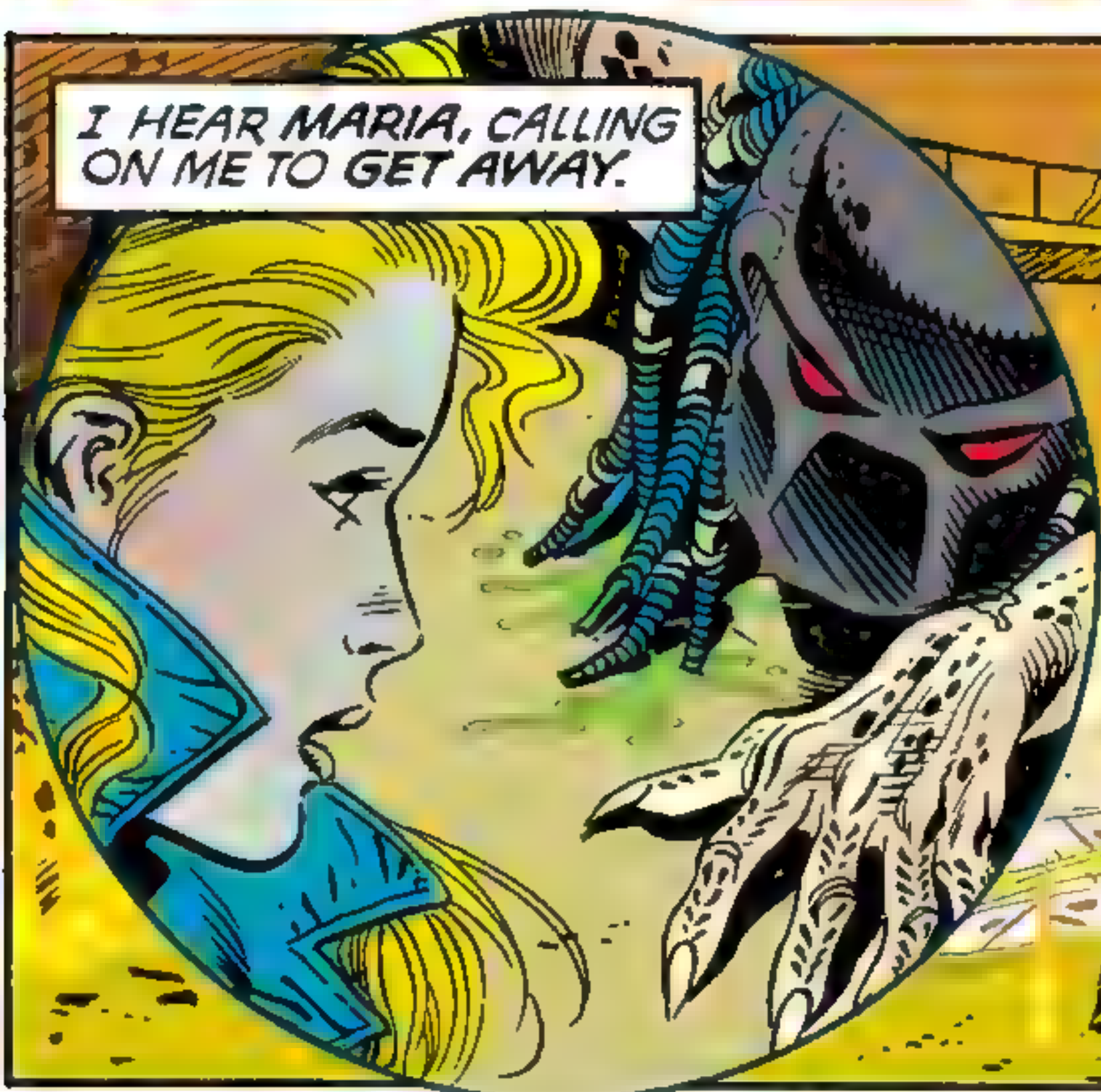


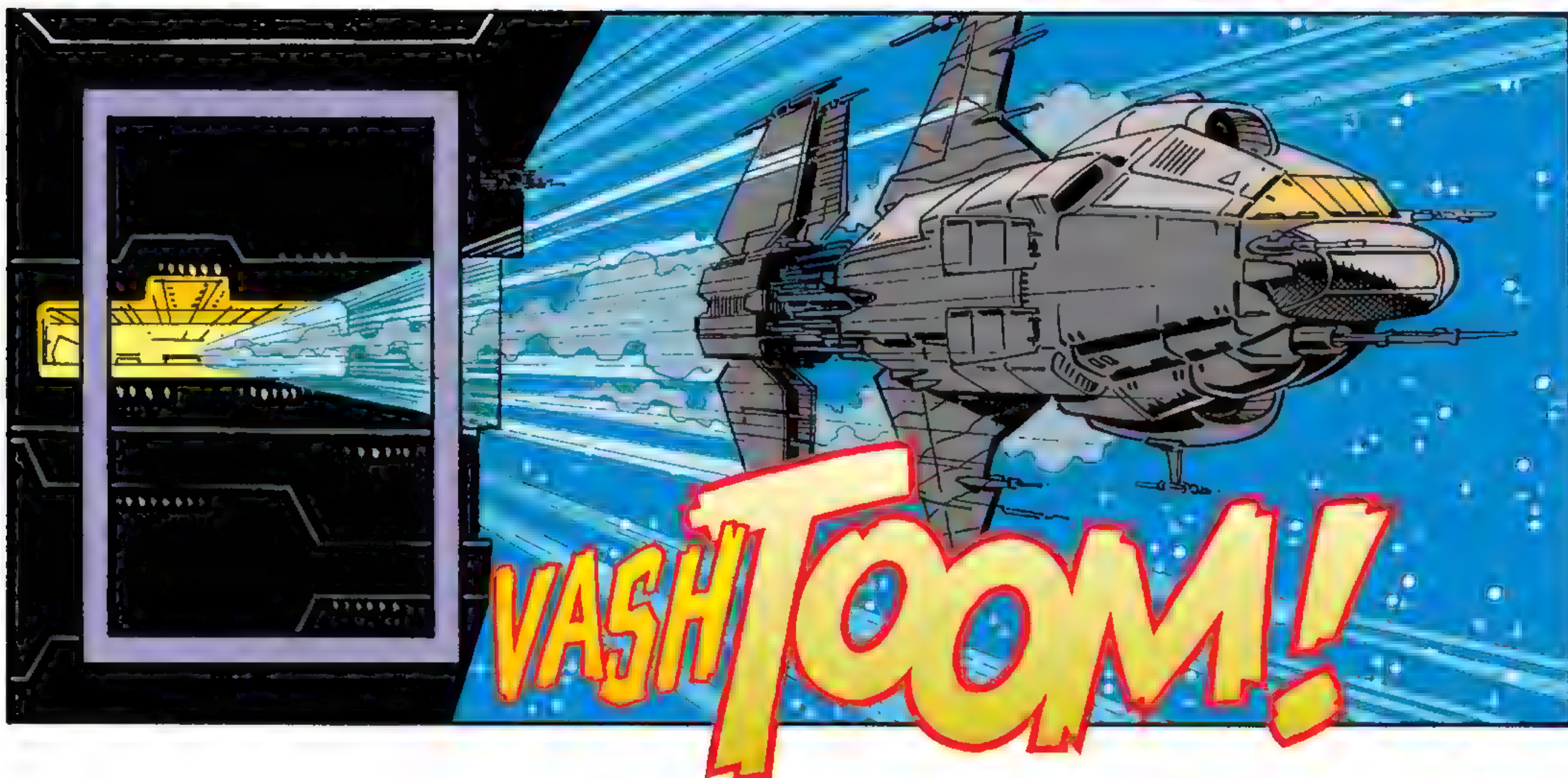
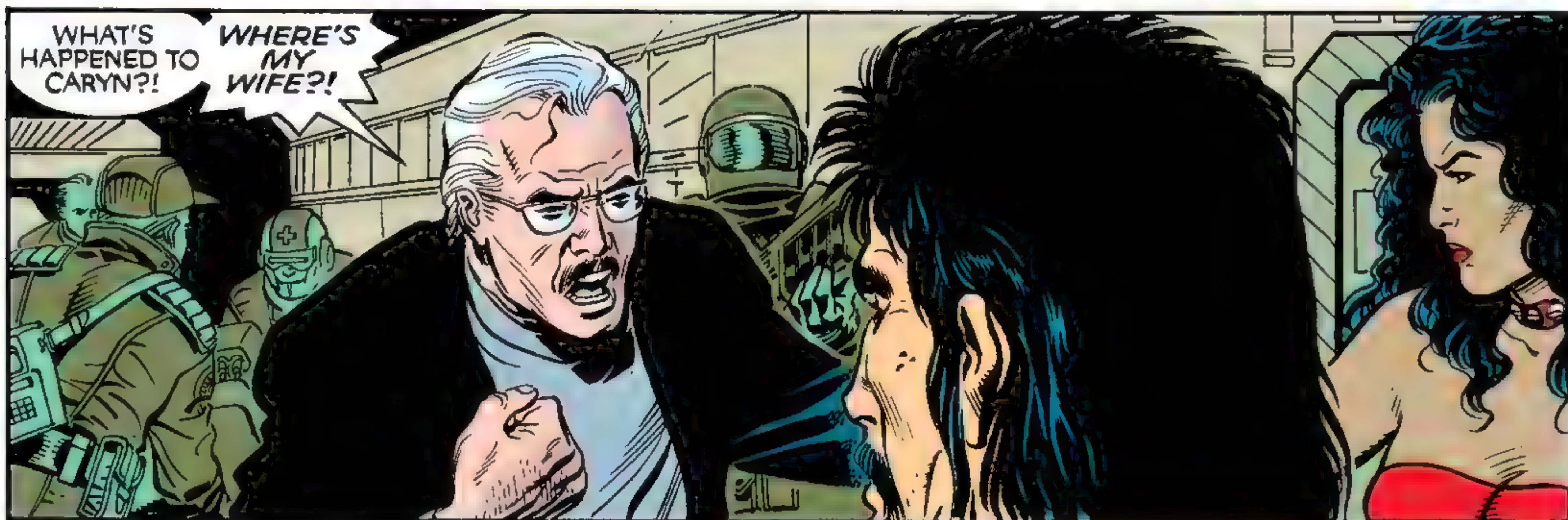
--TO
TURN OUT
SO UTTERLY
AN' TOTALLY
TO DIE
FOR!

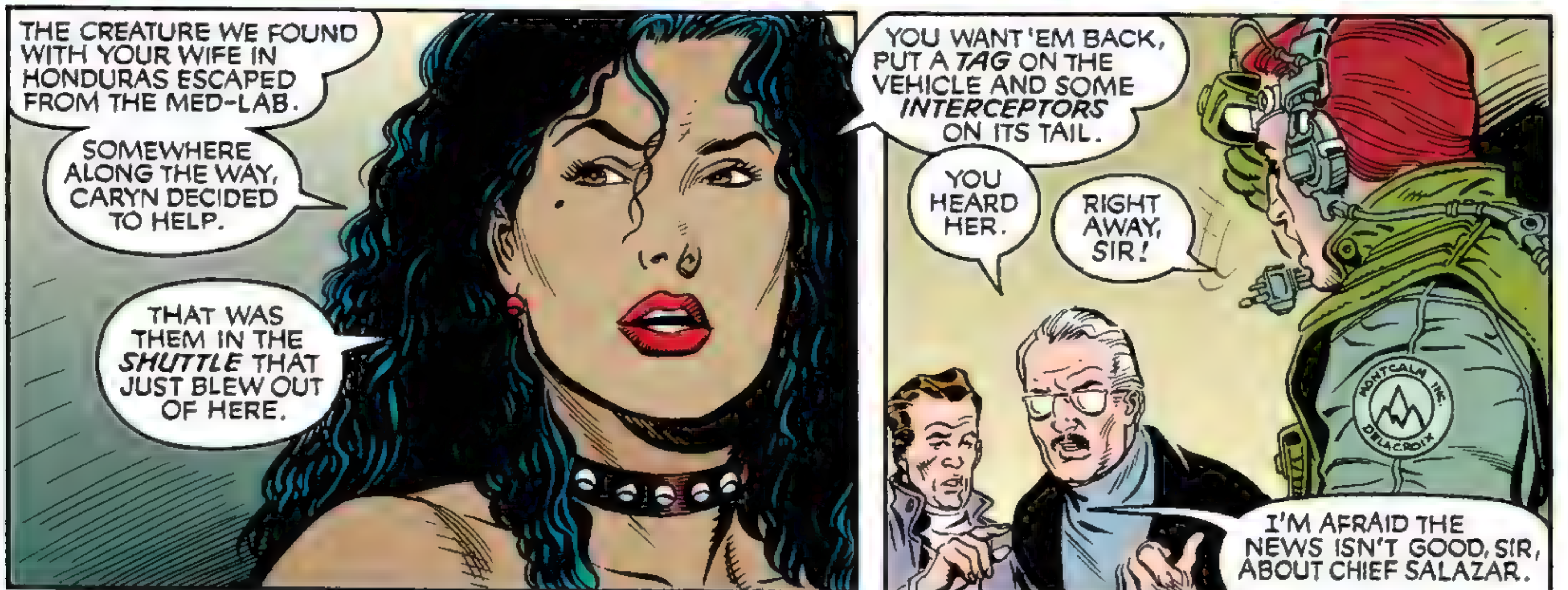
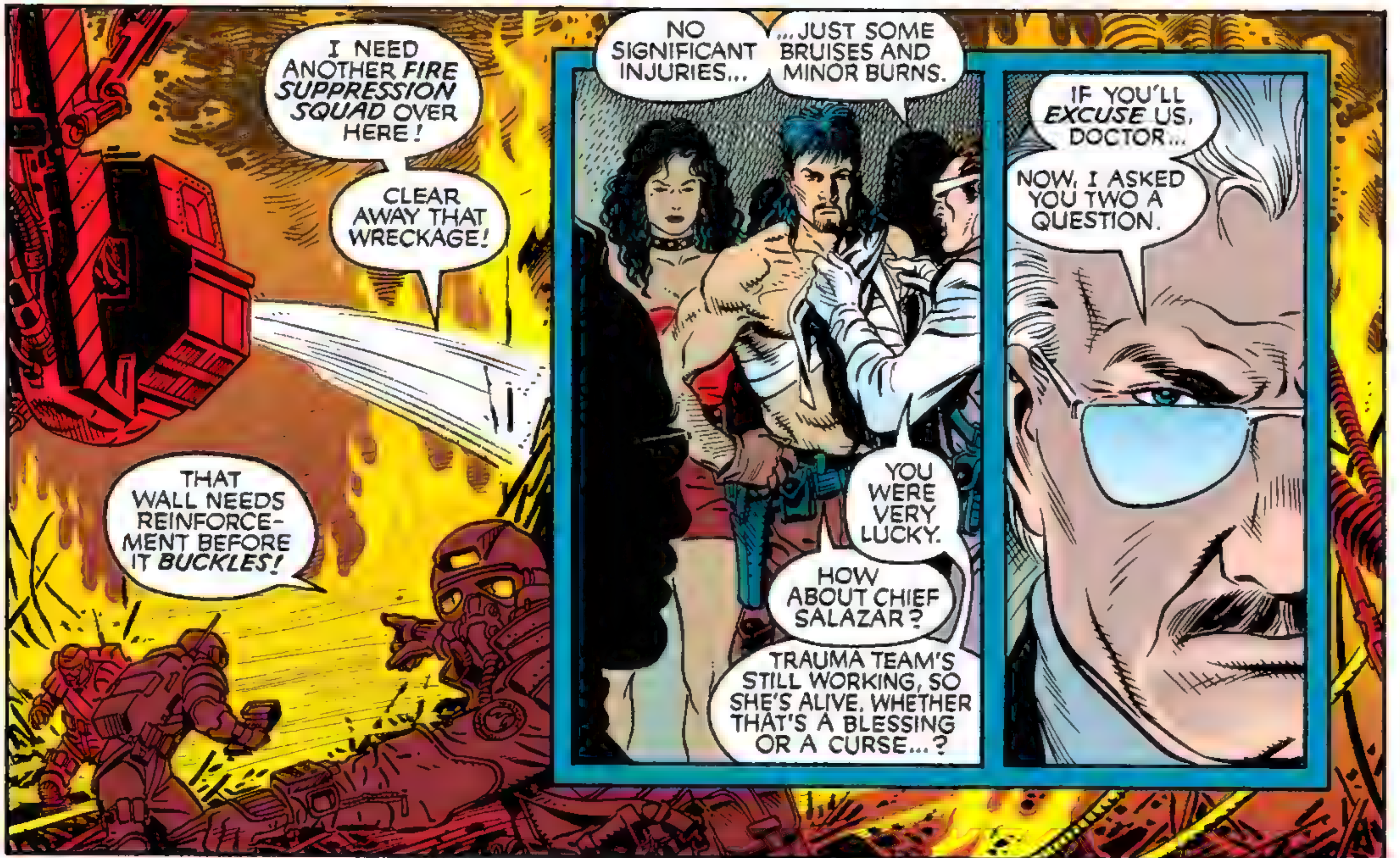


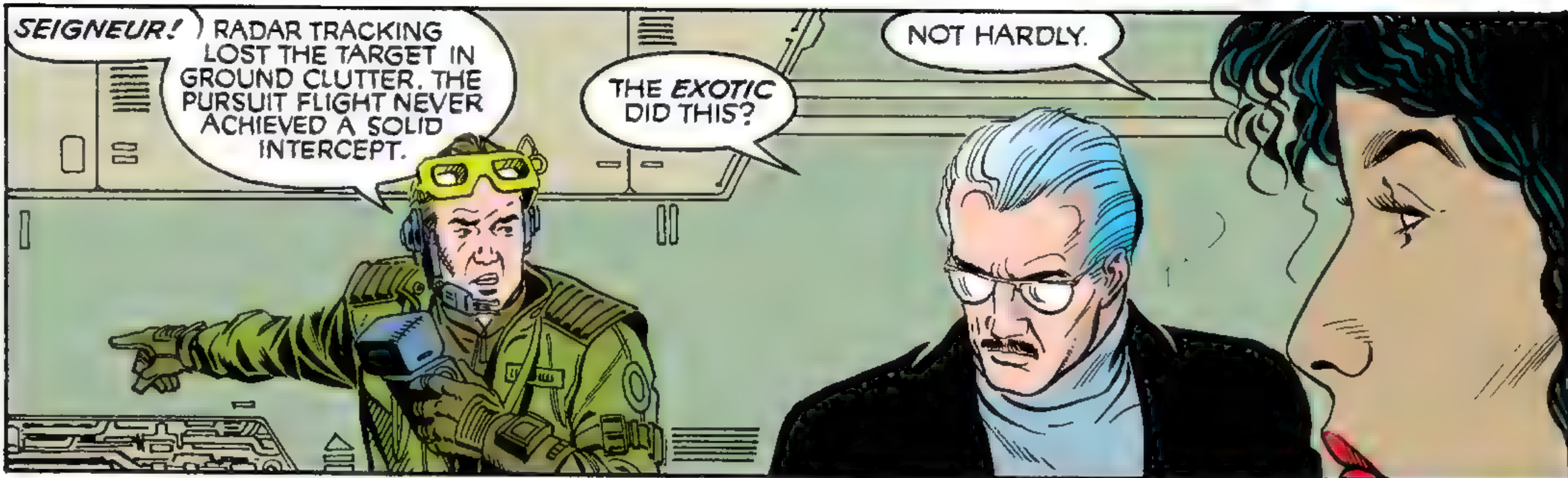












SEIGNEUR! RADAR TRACKING LOST THE TARGET IN GROUND CLUTTER. THE PURSUIT FLIGHT NEVER ACHIEVED A SOLID INTERCEPT.

THE EXOTIC DID THIS?

NOT HARDLY.



GISANDE AND I BOTH PUT ROUNDS INTO ITS CHEST.

IF THAT WASN'T ENOUGH, IT'S THE WRONG SIZE FOR A SHUTTLE COCKPIT.



IT COULD MAYBE HANDLE THE CONTROLS WELL ENOUGH TO FLY, BUT NOT TO EXECUTE THE KIND OF MANEUVERS NECESSARY TO LOSE YOUR INTERCEPTORS.

ONLY ONE OTHER CANDIDATE, SEIGNEUR.



DON'T BE ABSURD!

YOUR ANALYSIS IS FAULTY, COLONEL. CARYN CAN'T FLY. THERE MUST BE SOME OTHER EXPLANATION.

IF YOU SAY SO.



I WANT MY WIFE BACK, MAJOR. ALIVE AND WHOLE.

THE CREATURE AS WELL, IF THAT CAN BE MANAGED, BUT CARYN'S RETURN HAS **ABSOLUTE PRIORITY**.

TO THAT PURPOSE, I WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH ALL THE RESOURCES OF THIS CORPORATION

IN RETURN, I WILL ACCEPT NEITHER EXCUSES NOR FAILURE.

I TAKE IT, SEIGNEUR, WE DON'T HAVE A CHOICE.



EVERYONE HAS A CHOICE, MAJOR.

THE TRICK IS MAKING THE **RIGHT** ONE.

ANOTHER
DAWN.
ANOTHER
SET OF
SKILLS.

I DON'T NEED
NIGHTMARES
ANYMORE
TO SCARE
ME SILLY.

KENNEL
SPACE CENTER
CAPE
CANAVERAL,
FLORIDA
NASA

LIFE DOES
THAT NOW,
ALL BY
ITSELF.

I BANDAGED
THE PREDATOR...

... AS BEST
I COULD,
USING THE
SHUTTLE
MEDIKIT.

IT'S A
MIRACLE
SHE'S STILL
ALIVE.

JUDGING FROM THE FRESH
BLOODSTAINS, THOUGH, SHE
WON'T BE FOR MUCH LONGER.

SHE CAN BARELY
STAND. SHE NEEDS
ME NOW MORE
THAN EVER.

BUT ONCE WE'RE
ABOARD HER
SHIP-- AND HOW
DO I KNOW, SO
INSTANTLY AND
INSTINCTIVELY,
THAT'S WHAT
IT IS--

--WHAT
THEN?

ONLY
ONE WAY
TO FIND
OUT.

EDUARDO
BARRETO

I'M NOT SUPPOSED
TO BE HERE.



NOTHING
IN MEMORY,
NOTHING IN
LIFE, HAS
PREPARED
ME FOR THIS.

EVERY FIBER OF MY BEING
SCREAMS AT ME TO GO BACK.
DENY THE MADNESS. RETURN
TO THE SAFE, ORDERED, SANE
WORLD THAT ONCE WAS MINE.

INSTEAD,
I GO
FORWARD.

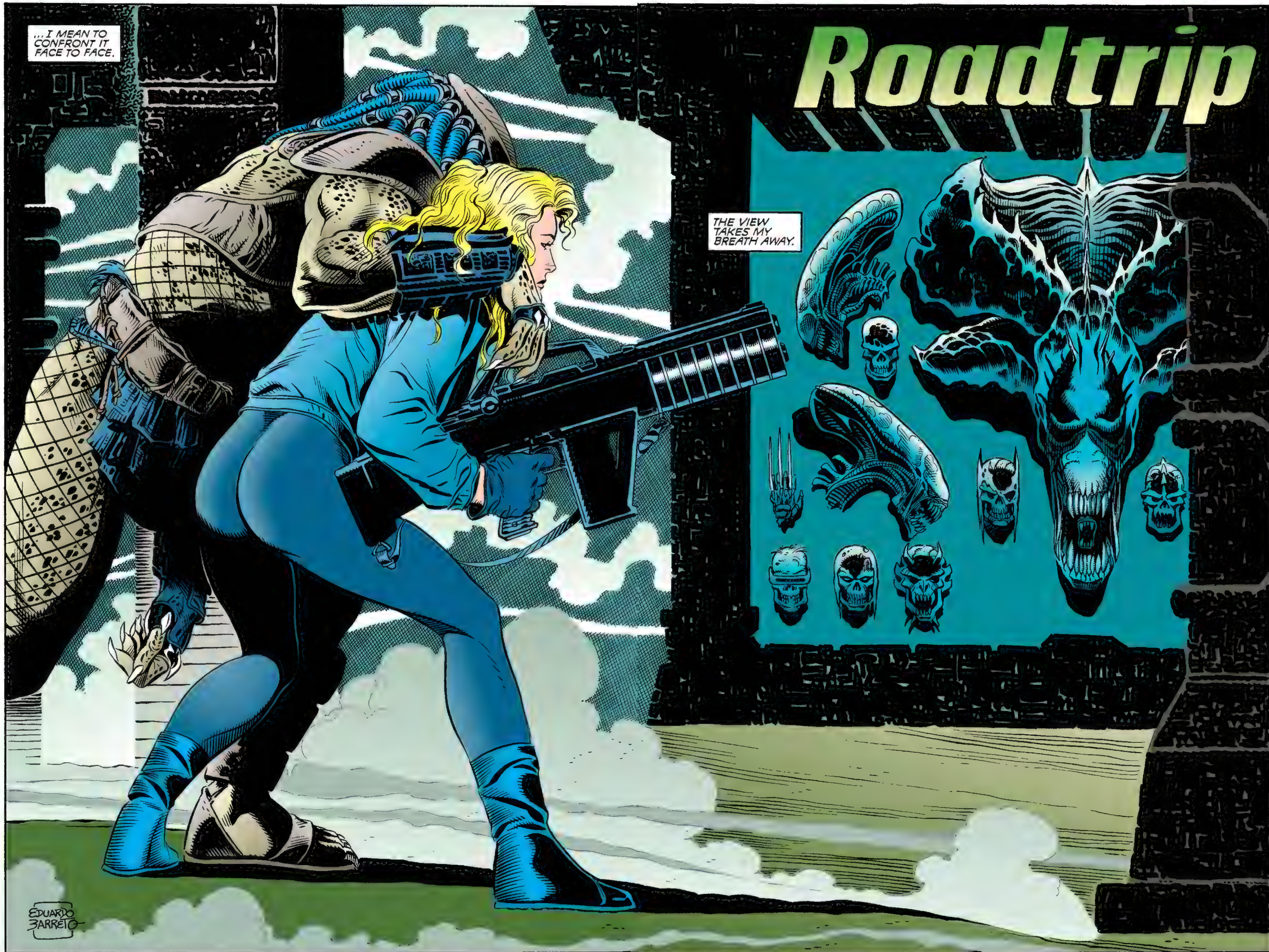
IF THIS IS TRULY MY
NIGHTMARE...

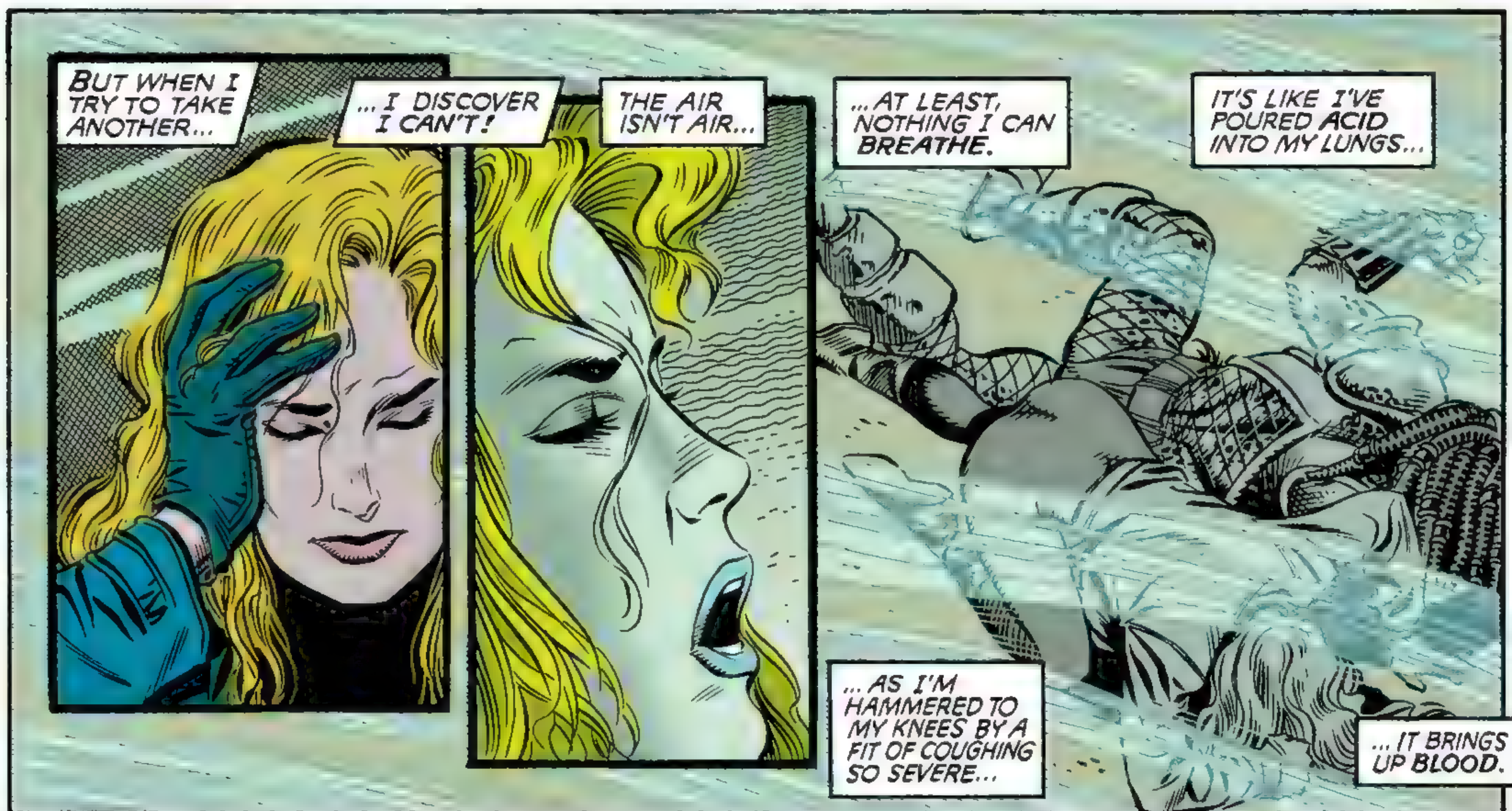


... I MEAN TO
CONFRONT IT
FACE TO FACE.

Roadtrip

THE VIEW
TAKES MY
BREATH AWAY.





SO MUCH FOR MY DREAMS.

ASH...
PARNALL...?



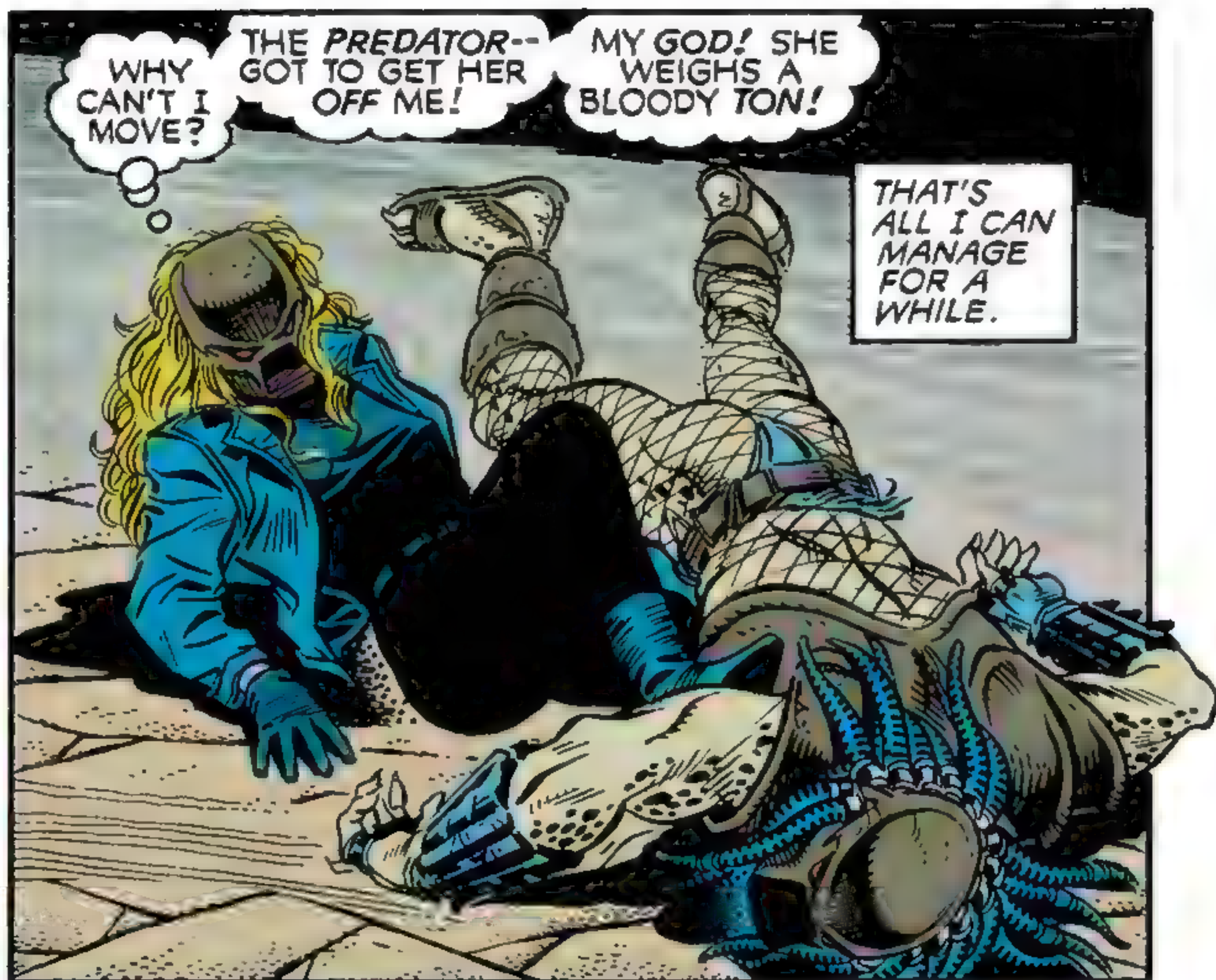


Wha--?!

MY FACE-- THERE'S SOMETHING ON MY **FACE!**

IT'S A **MASK!**

I'M WEARING A MASK.

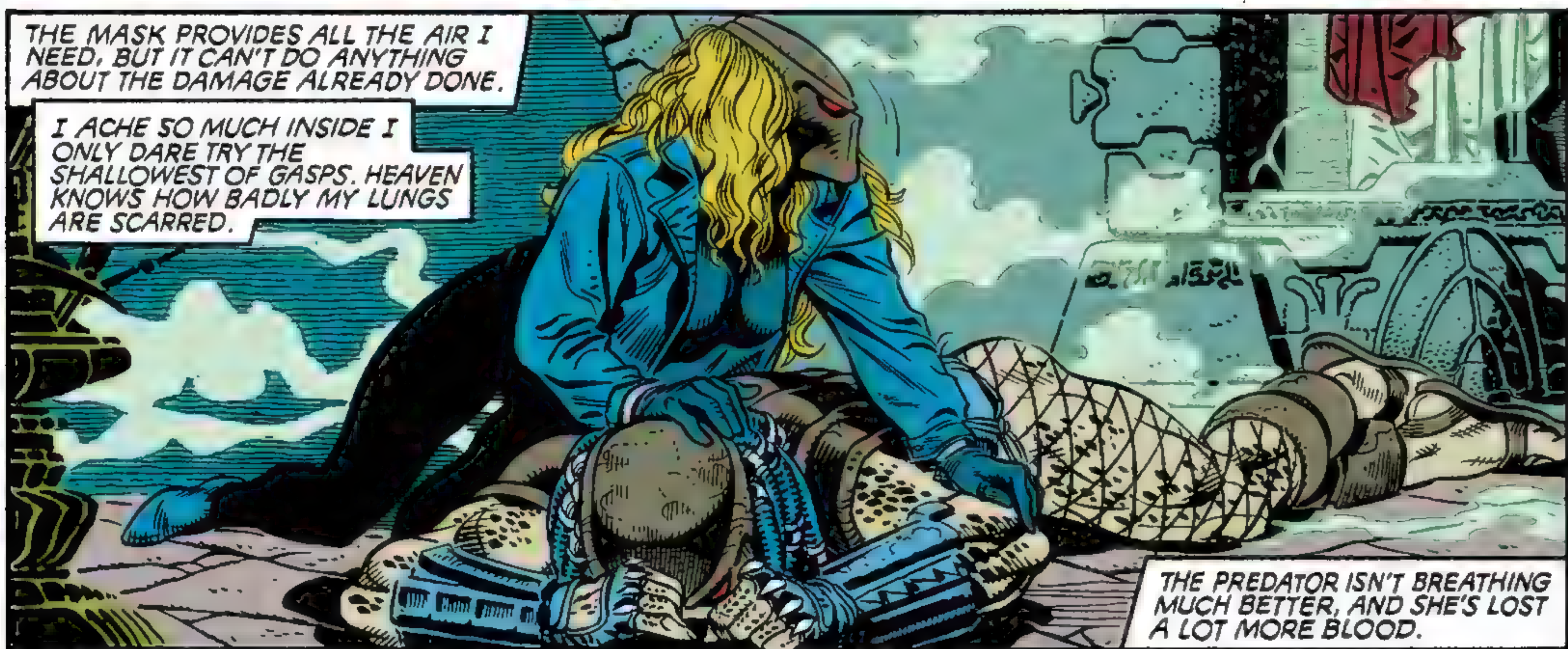


WHY CAN'T I MOVE?

THE **PREDATOR**-- GOT TO GET HER OFF ME!

MY GOD! SHE WEIGHS A **BLOODY TON!**

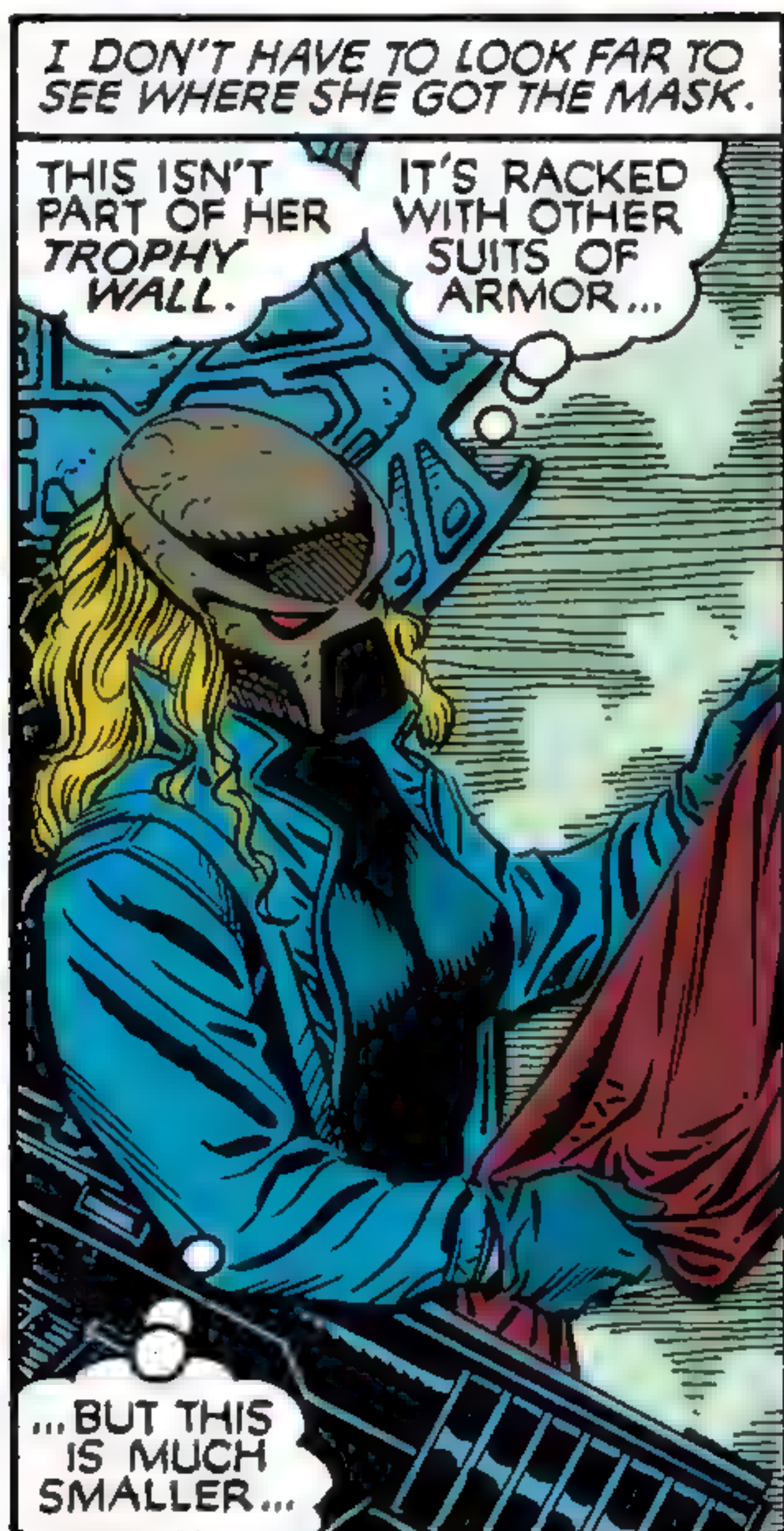
THAT'S ALL I CAN MANAGE FOR A **WHILE.**



THE MASK PROVIDES ALL THE AIR I NEED, BUT IT CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT THE DAMAGE ALREADY DONE.

I ACHIEVE SO MUCH INSIDE I ONLY DARE TRY THE SHALLOWEST OF GASPS. HEAVEN KNOWS HOW BADLY MY LUNGS ARE SCARRED.

THE PREDATOR ISN'T BREATHING MUCH BETTER, AND SHE'S LOST A LOT MORE BLOOD.



I DON'T HAVE TO LOOK FAR TO SEE WHERE SHE GOT THE MASK.

THIS ISN'T PART OF HER **TROPHY WALL.**

IT'S RACKED WITH OTHER SUITS OF **ARMOR...**

... BUT THIS IS MUCH **SMALLER...**



... SMALLER EVEN THAN **ME.**

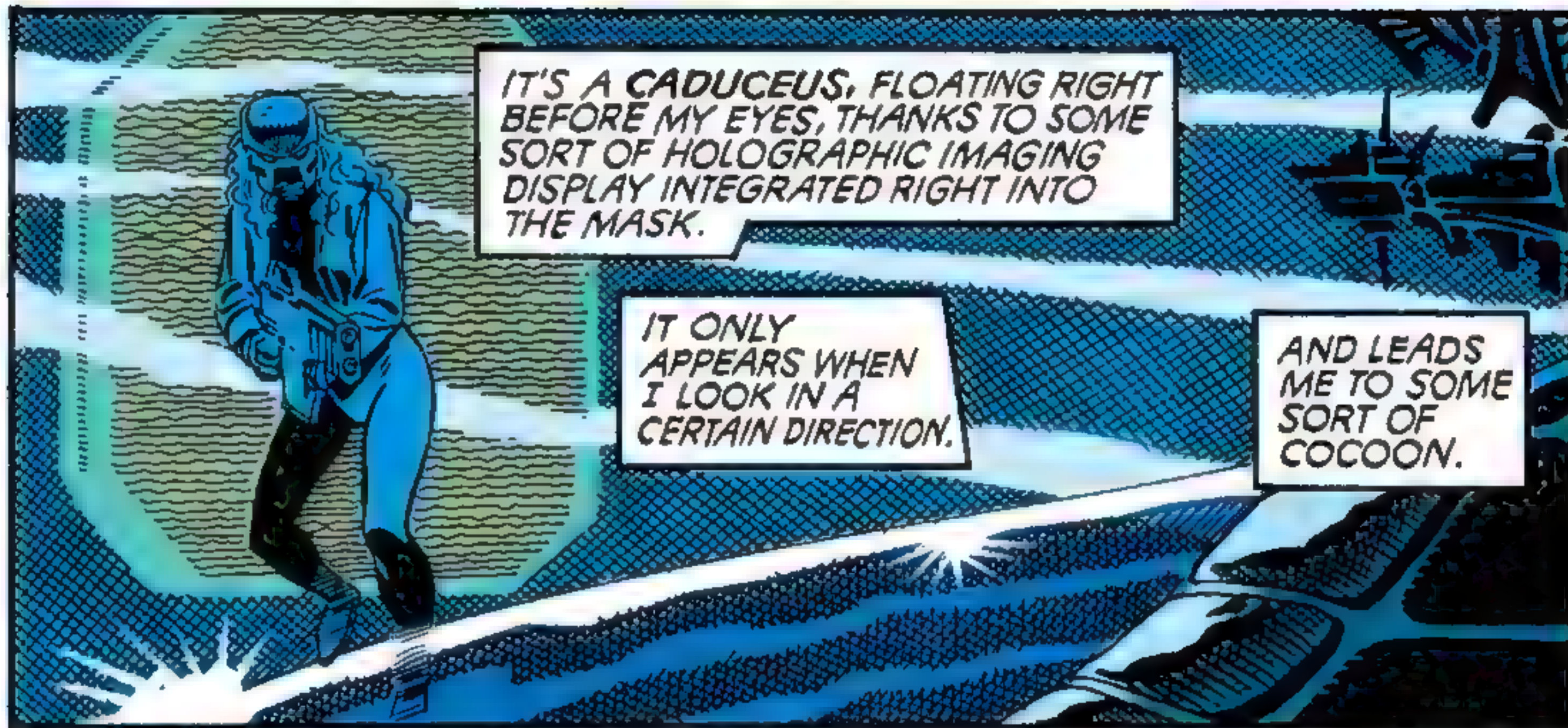


ASH! ASH PARNALL!

ARE YOU HERE? YOUR FRIEND'S BADLY HURT, AND I DON'T KNOW HOW TO SAVE HER!

ANSWER ME, DAMN YOU! I NEED YOUR **HELP!**

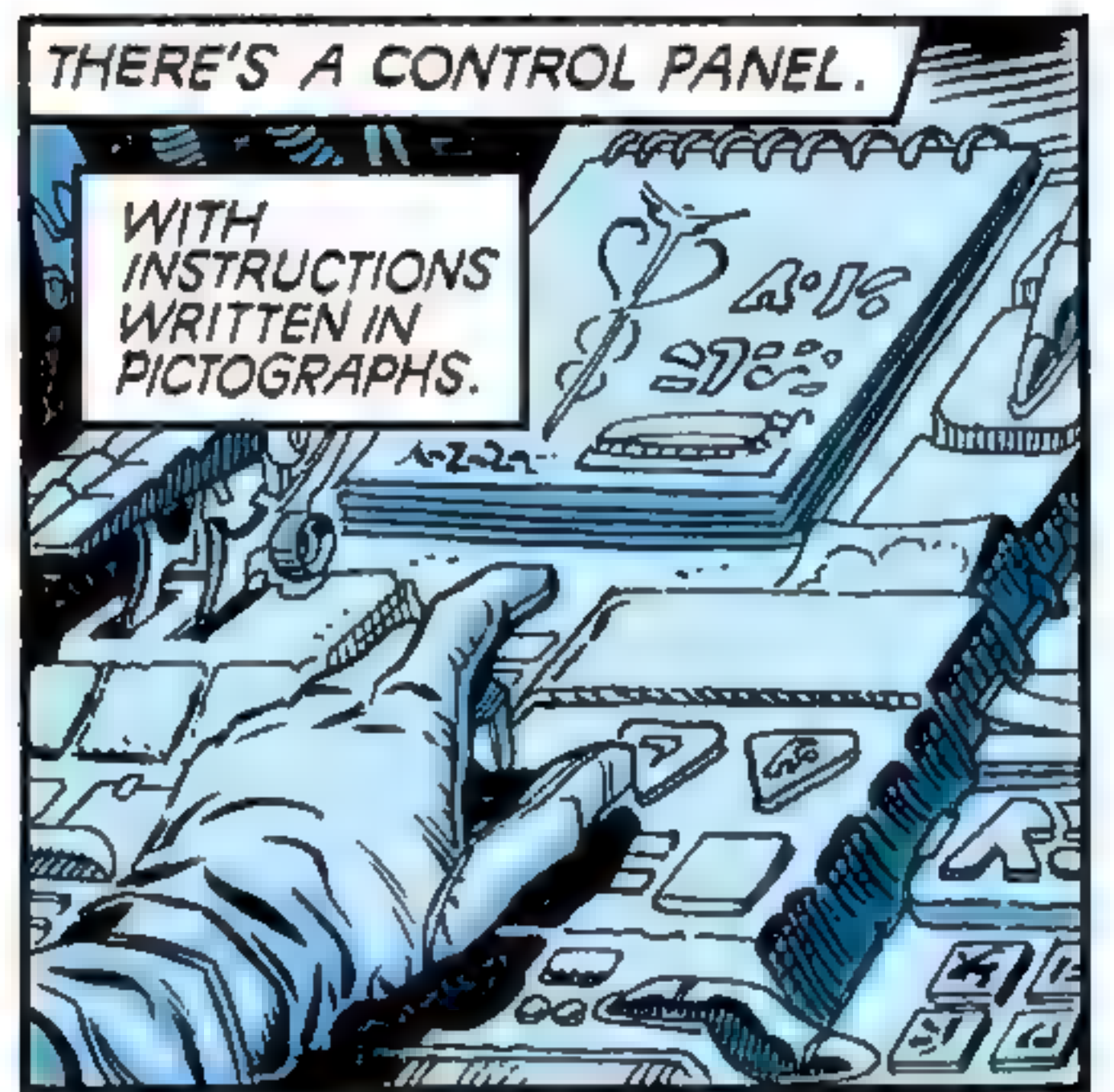
AND IN HER WAY, SHE DOES.



IT'S A CADUCEUS, FLOATING RIGHT BEFORE MY EYES, THANKS TO SOME SORT OF HOLOGRAPHIC IMAGING DISPLAY INTEGRATED RIGHT INTO THE MASK.

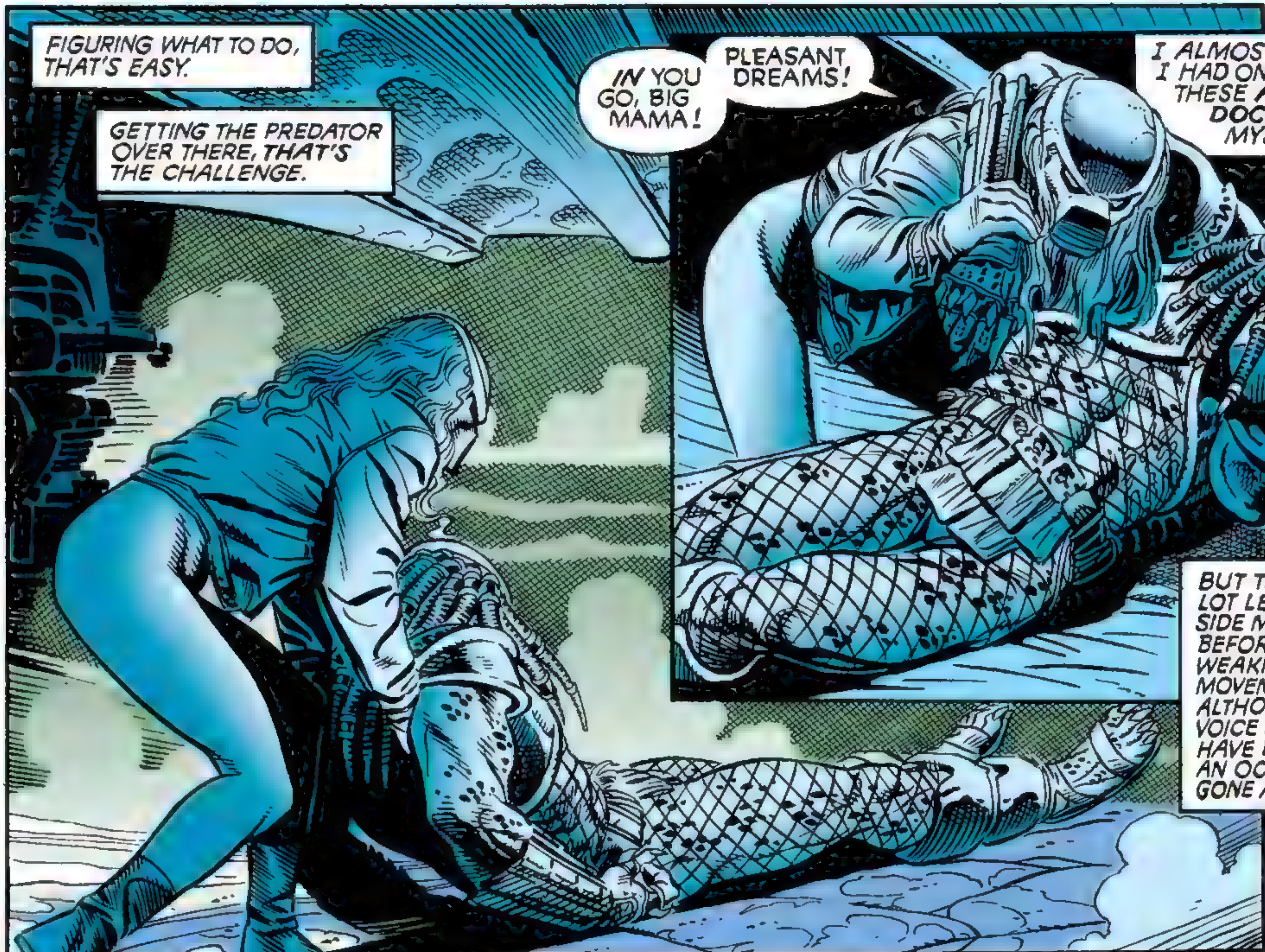
IT ONLY APPEARS WHEN I LOOK IN A CERTAIN DIRECTION.

AND LEADS ME TO SOME SORT OF COCOON.



THERE'S A CONTROL PANEL.

WITH INSTRUCTIONS WRITTEN IN PICTOGRAPHS.



FIGURING WHAT TO DO, THAT'S EASY.

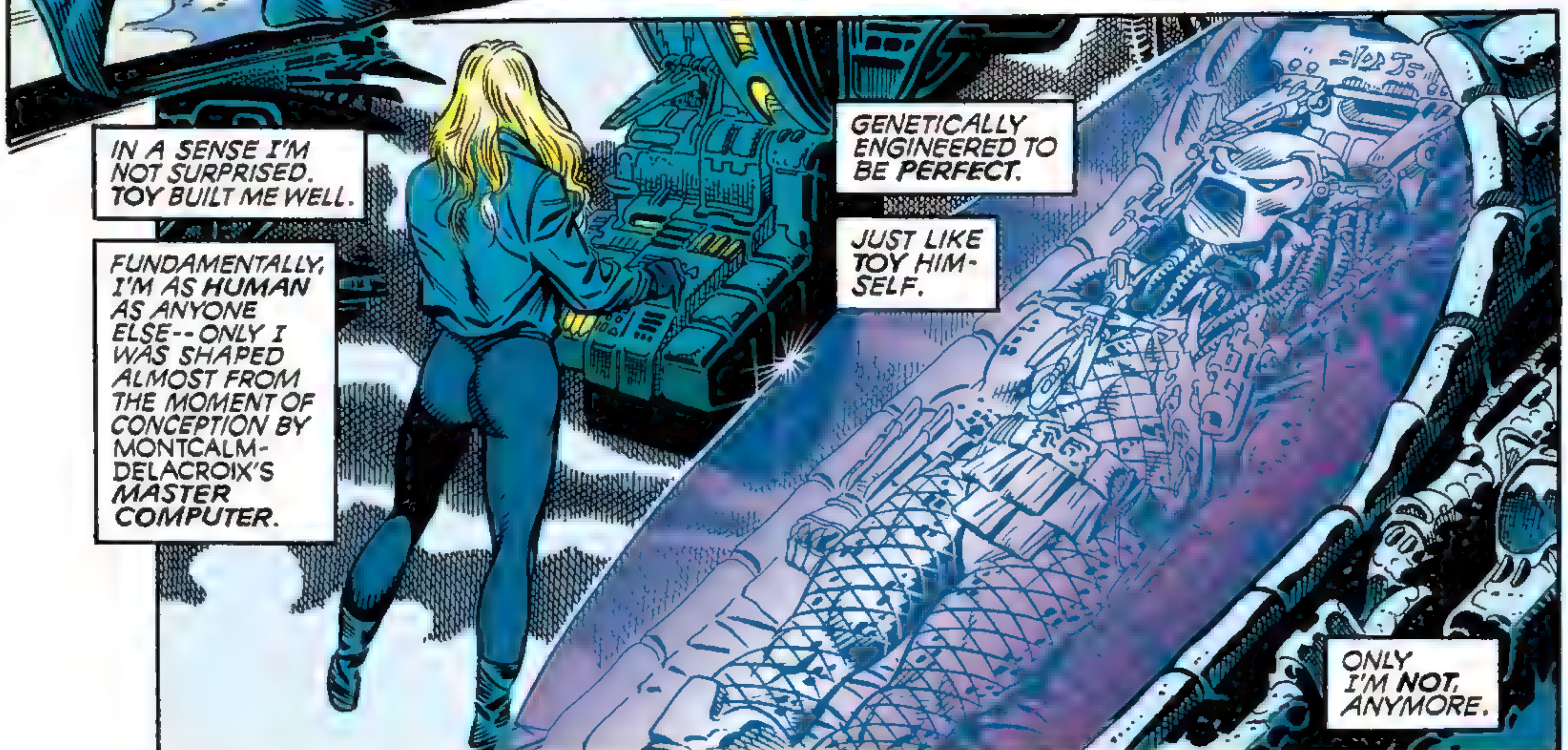
GETTING THE PREDATOR OVER THERE, THAT'S THE CHALLENGE.

IN YOU GO, BIG MAMA!

PLEASANT DREAMS!

I ALMOST WISH I HAD ONE OF THESE AUTO-DOCS FOR MYSELF.

BUT THERE'S A LOT LESS PAIN INSIDE ME THAN BEFORE, AND NO WEAKNESS TO MY MOVEMENTS-- ALTHOUGH MY VOICE SEEMS TO HAVE DROPPED AN OCTAVE AND GONE ALL HUSKY.



IN A SENSE I'M NOT SURPRISED. TOY BUILT ME WELL.

FUNDAMENTALLY, I'M AS HUMAN AS ANYONE ELSE-- ONLY I WAS SHAPED ALMOST FROM THE MOMENT OF CONCEPTION BY MONTCALM-DELA-CROIX'S MASTER COMPUTER.

GENETICALLY ENGINEERED TO BE PERFECT.

JUST LIKE TOY HIMSELF.

ONLY I'M NOT, ANYMORE.



I DON'T LIKE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THAT TRAIN OF THOUGHT.

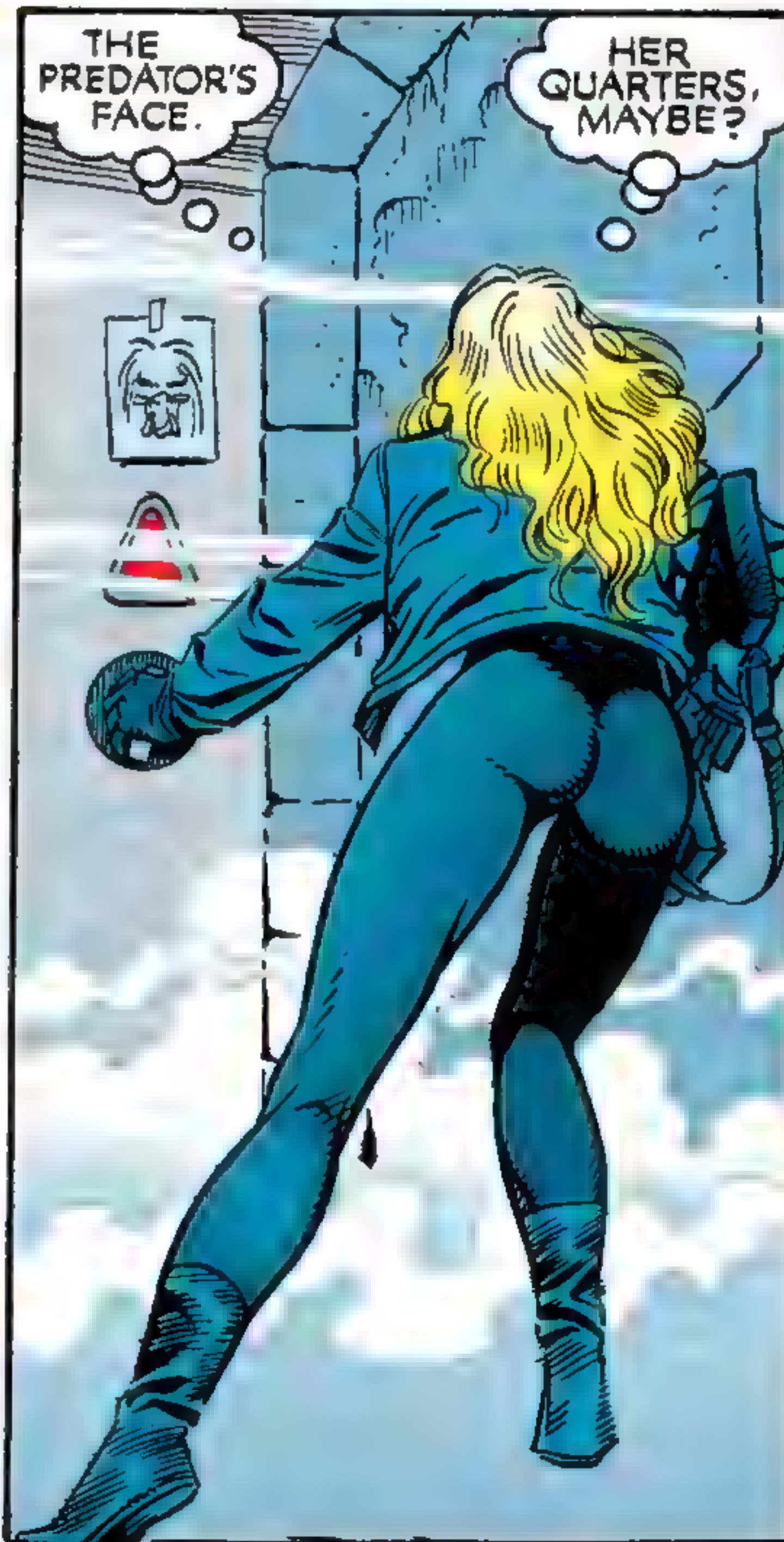
I DECIDE TO GO EXPLORING INSTEAD.

IT'S A BIG SHIP--SHOULD KEEP ME OCCUPIED AWHILE.

AT FIRST GLANCE, WE SEEM SO MUCH ALIKE, THE PREDATOR AND I.



ANOTHER PICTO-GRAPH!



THE PREDATOR'S FACE.

HER QUARTERS, MAYBE?

TWO ARMS, TWO LEGS, STANDING ERECT WITH THE HEAD ATOP A CENTRAL TORSO. SHE USES HUMAN WEAPONS -- I CAN EVIDENTLY WEAR HER GEAR.



KLAKT



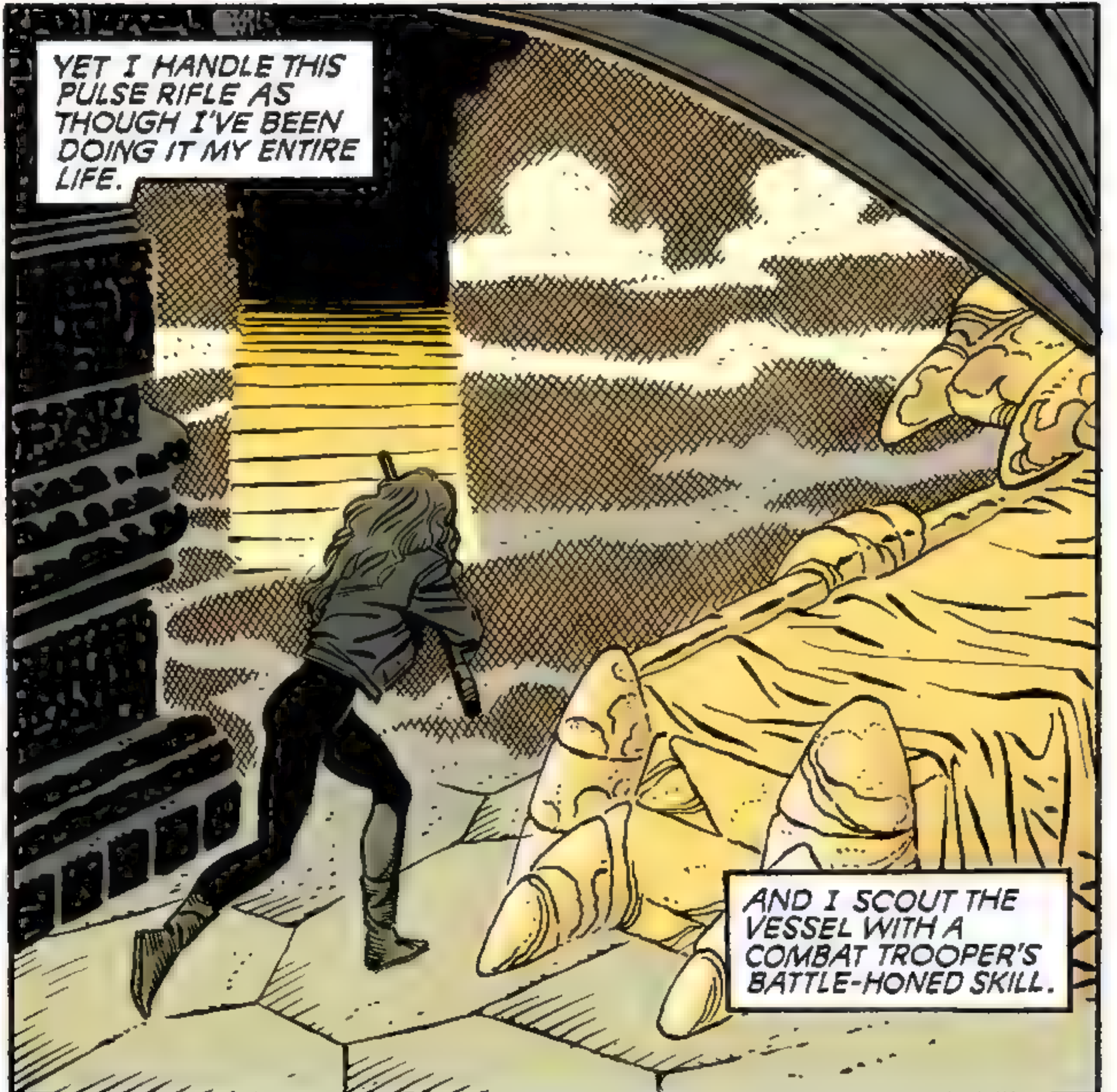
BUT EVERY SO OFTEN, I FIND MYSELF REMINDED OF HOW TRULY ALIEN WE ARE.

WHRUM



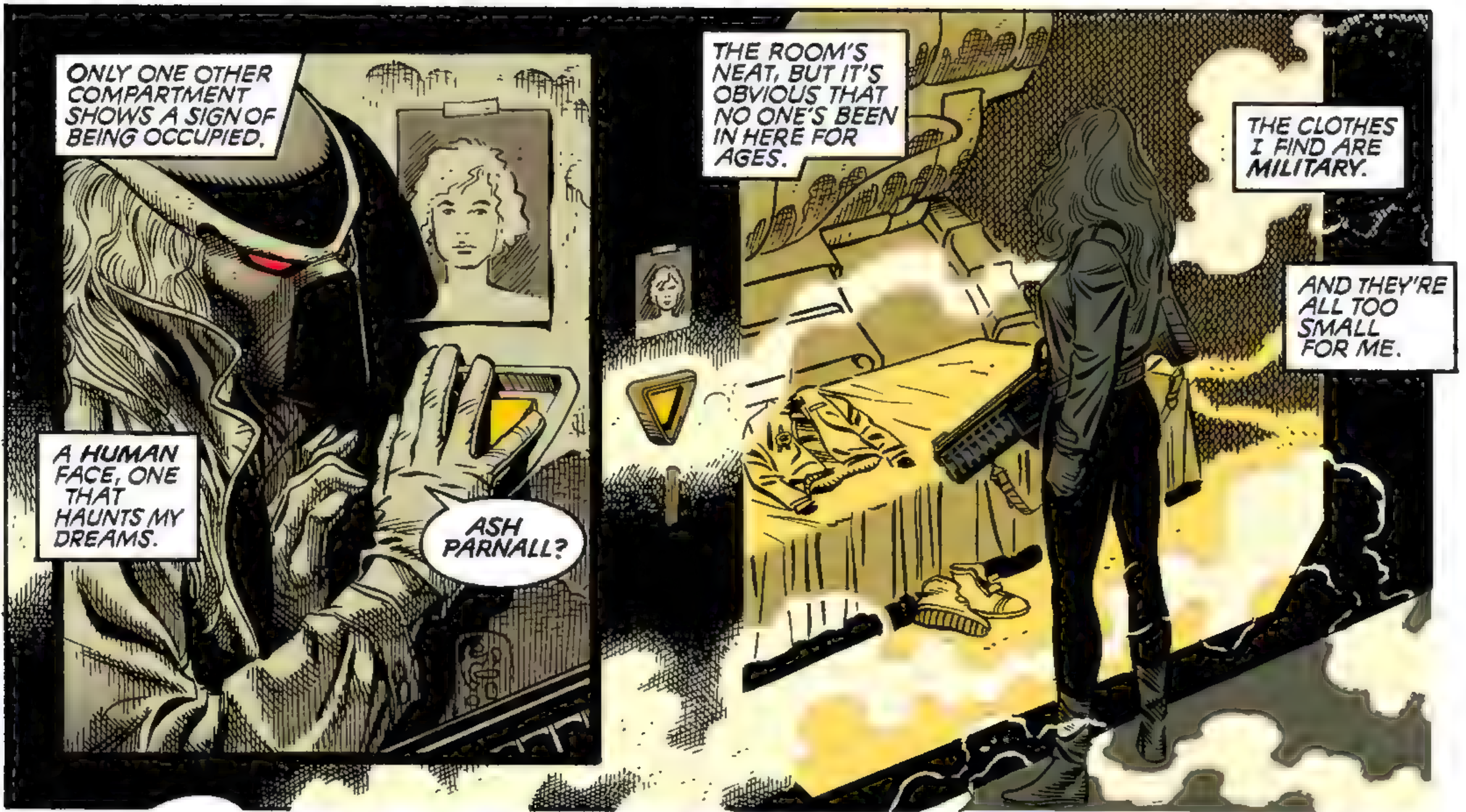
SORT OF THE SAME WAY I'M COMING TO FEEL ABOUT MYSELF.

I'M A TROPHY WIFE, THE IDEAL CONSORT, DESIGNED FOR LOVE, NOT WAR.



YET I HANDLE THIS PULSE RIFLE AS THOUGH I'VE BEEN DOING IT MY ENTIRE LIFE.

AND I SCOUT THE VESSEL WITH A COMBAT TROOPER'S BATTLE-HONED SKILL.



ONLY ONE OTHER COMPARTMENT SHOWS A SIGN OF BEING OCCUPIED.

A HUMAN FACE, ONE THAT HAUNTS MY DREAMS.

ASH PARNALL?

THE ROOM'S NEAT, BUT IT'S OBVIOUS THAT NO ONE'S BEEN IN HERE FOR AGES.

THE CLOTHES I FIND ARE MILITARY.

AND THEY'RE ALL TOO SMALL FOR ME.



I DON'T MUCH MIND-- I WOULDN'T WEAR THEM IF I COULD.

I'M A TROPHY-- I WEAR ONLY THE BEST.

THESE MAY BE PRACTICAL AND COMFORTABLE, BUT THEY HAVE ALL THE STYLE OF A DEAD BRICK.



WHAT BROUGHT YOU TOGETHER, ASH...

...YOU AND THE PREDATOR?

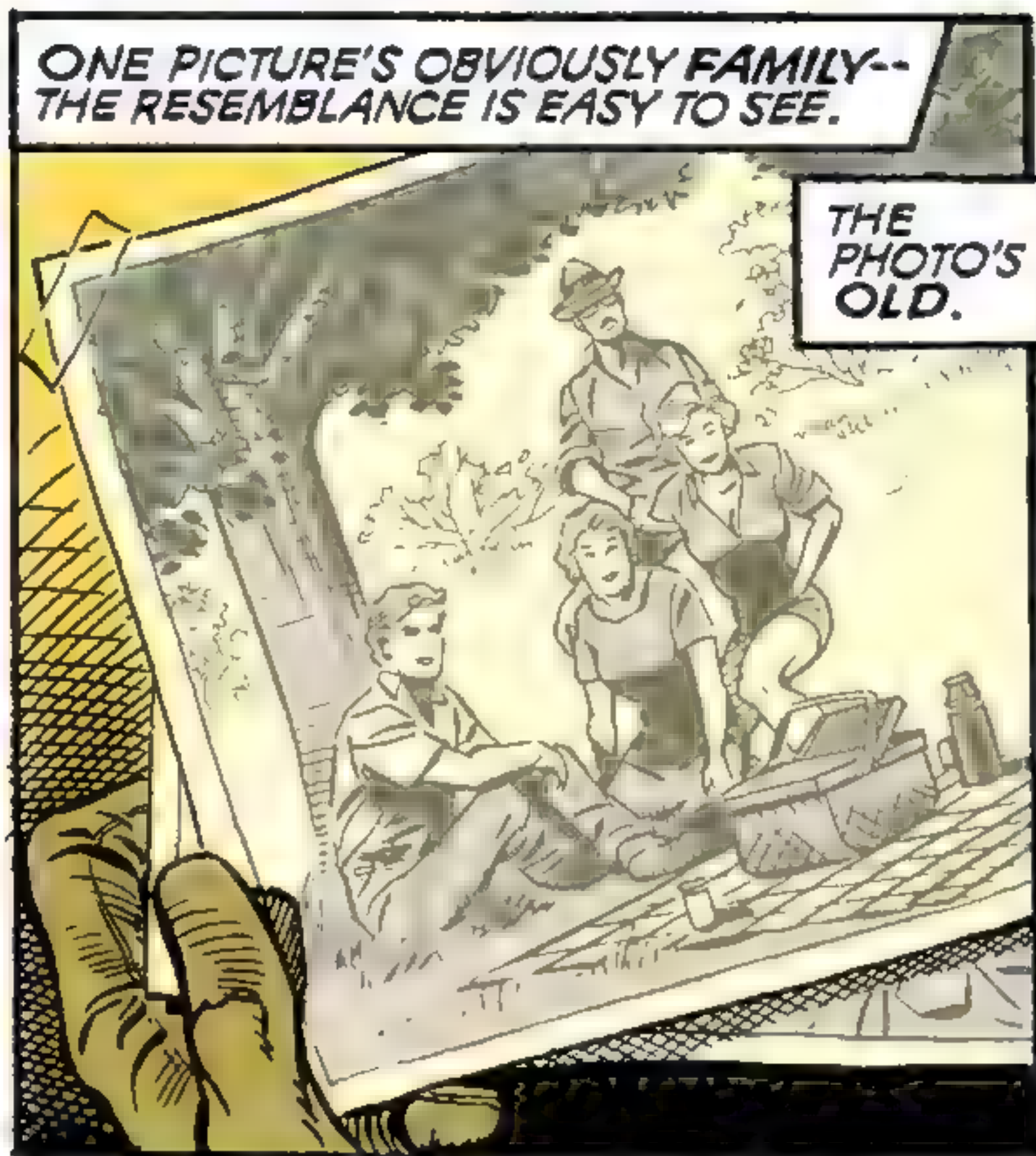
WHEN I THINK OF HER, IT'S NATURAL TO CALL HER "BIG MAMA."



ARE YOU TWO SOMEHOW RELATED?

ARE WE?

IS THAT WHY I'M INVOLVED?



ONE PICTURE'S OBVIOUSLY FAMILY-- THE RESEMBLANCE IS EASY TO SEE.

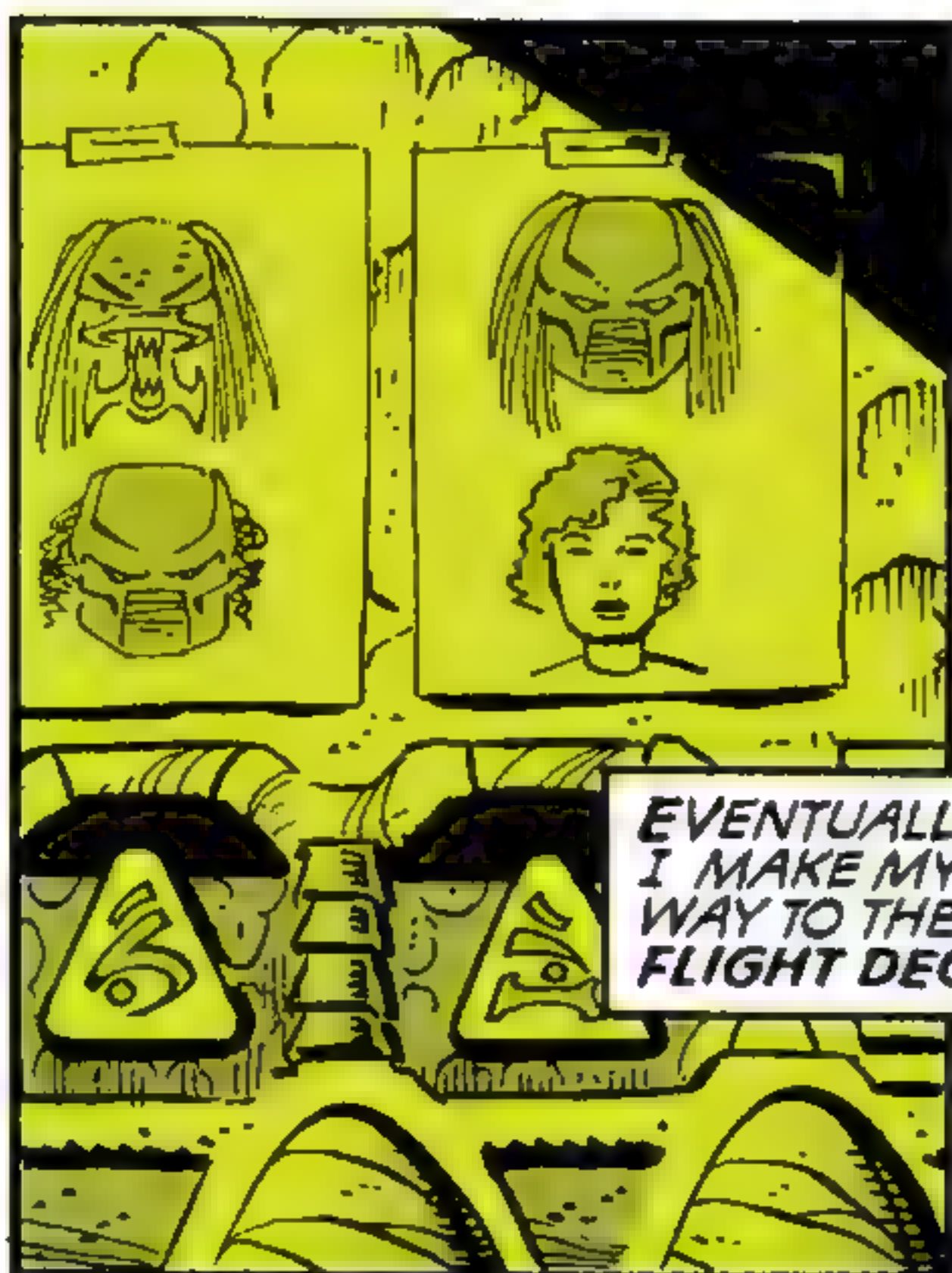
THE PHOTO'S OLD.



THE OTHER'S STAINED.

WITH TEARS.

AND BLOOD.



FWOOSH!

AIR!

WITH A METHANE UNDERTASTE, TRUE, BUT SAFE ENOUGH TO BREATHE. I'LL SETTLE FOR THAT.



AND THEN YOU COME UP WITH A WAY TO PASS ALONG THAT INFORMATION TO WHOEVER COMES ABOARD.

DOESN'T MATTER IF THEY DON'T SPEAK YOUR LANGUAGE, DOESN'T EVEN MATTER IF THEY'RE ILLITERATE...

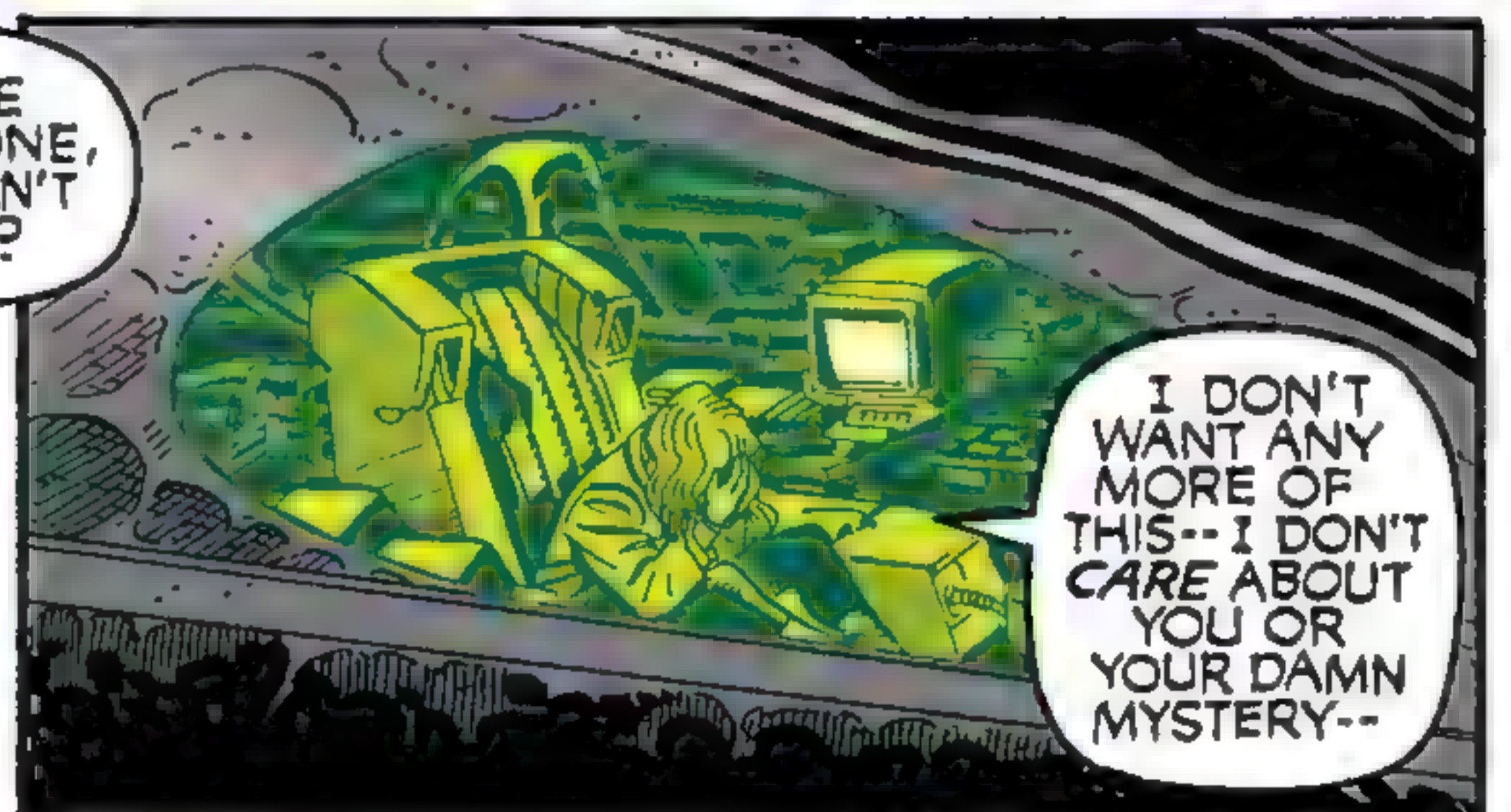
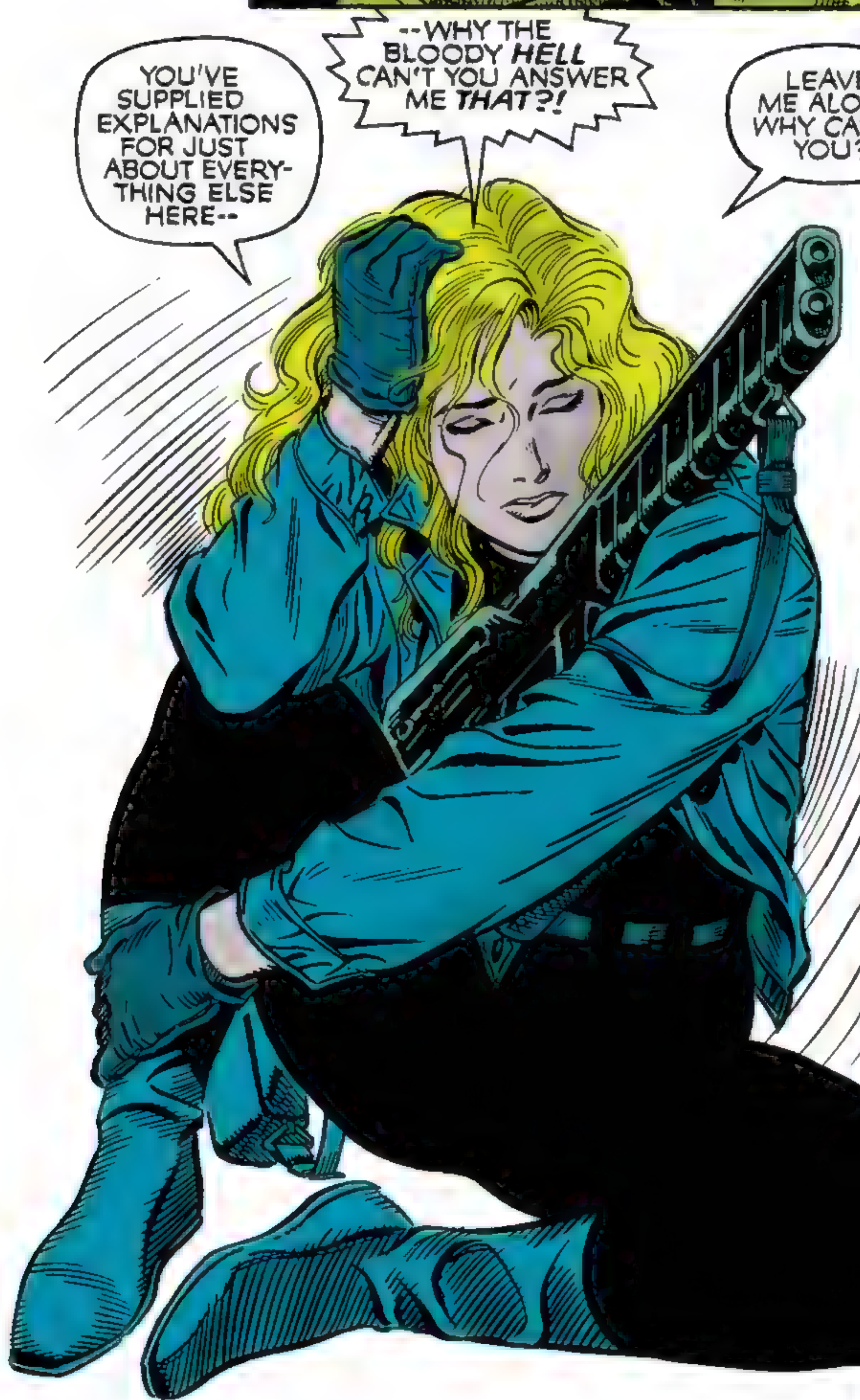
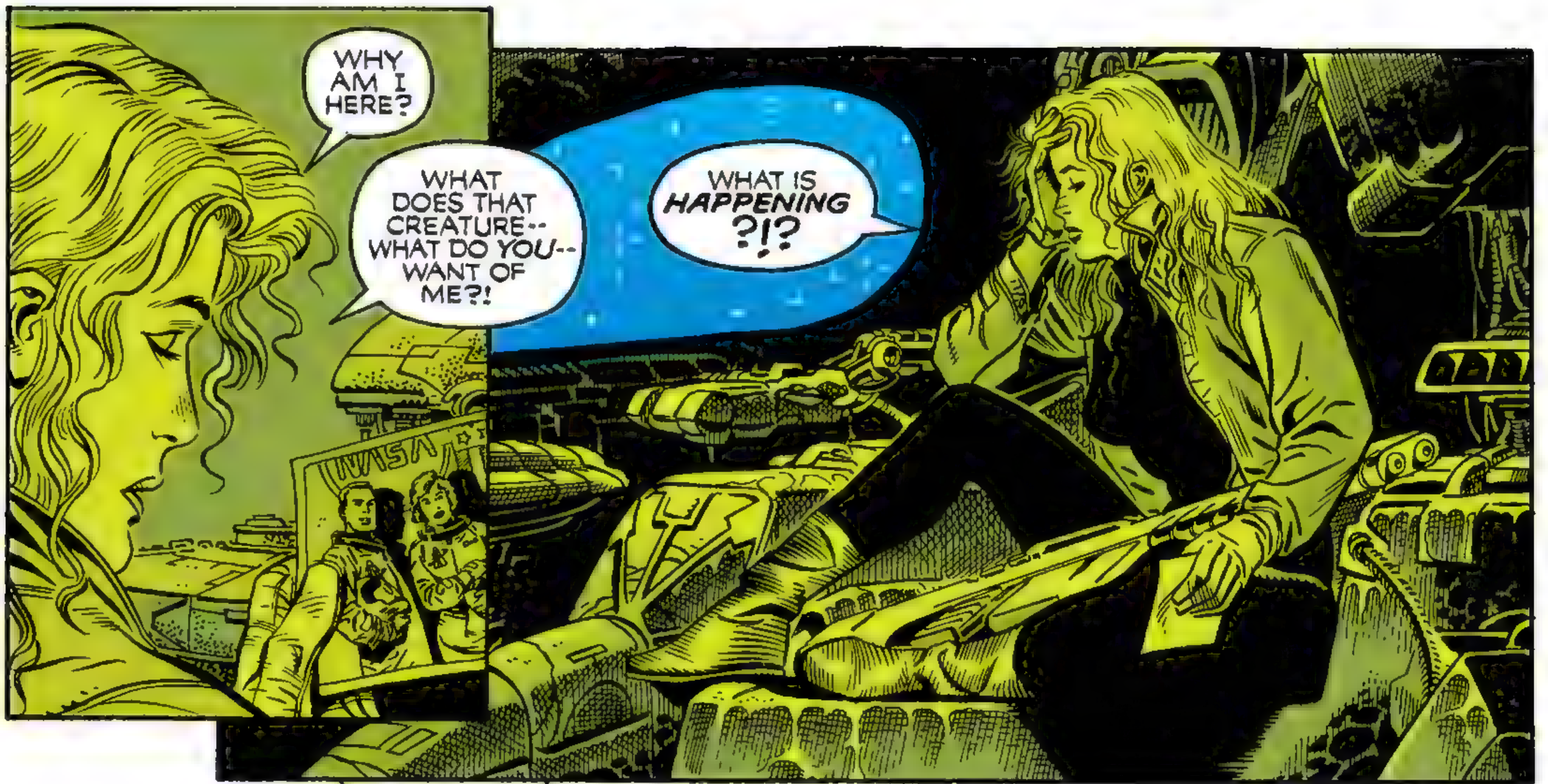
...YOU MADE IT SIMPLE ENOUGH FOR ANYONE TO PUZZLE OUT.

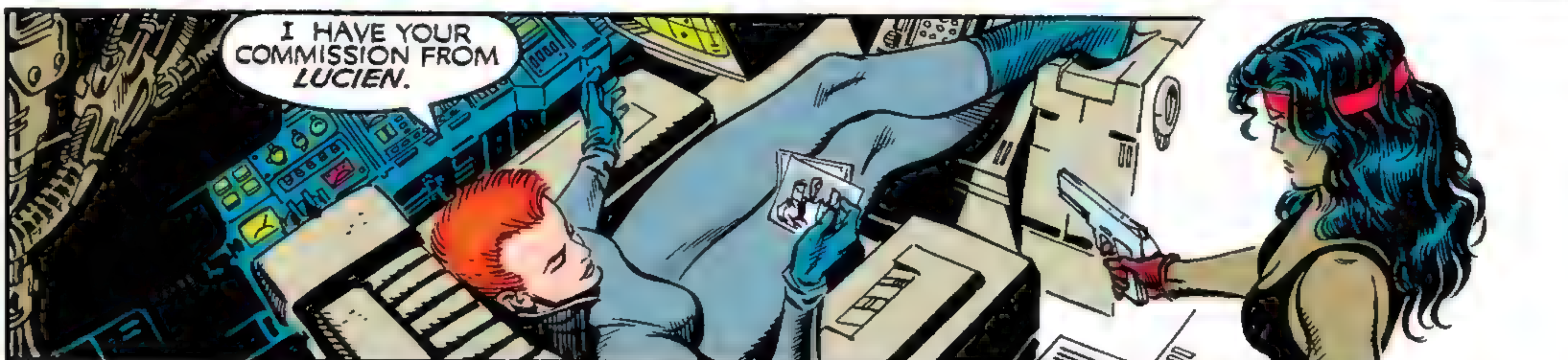
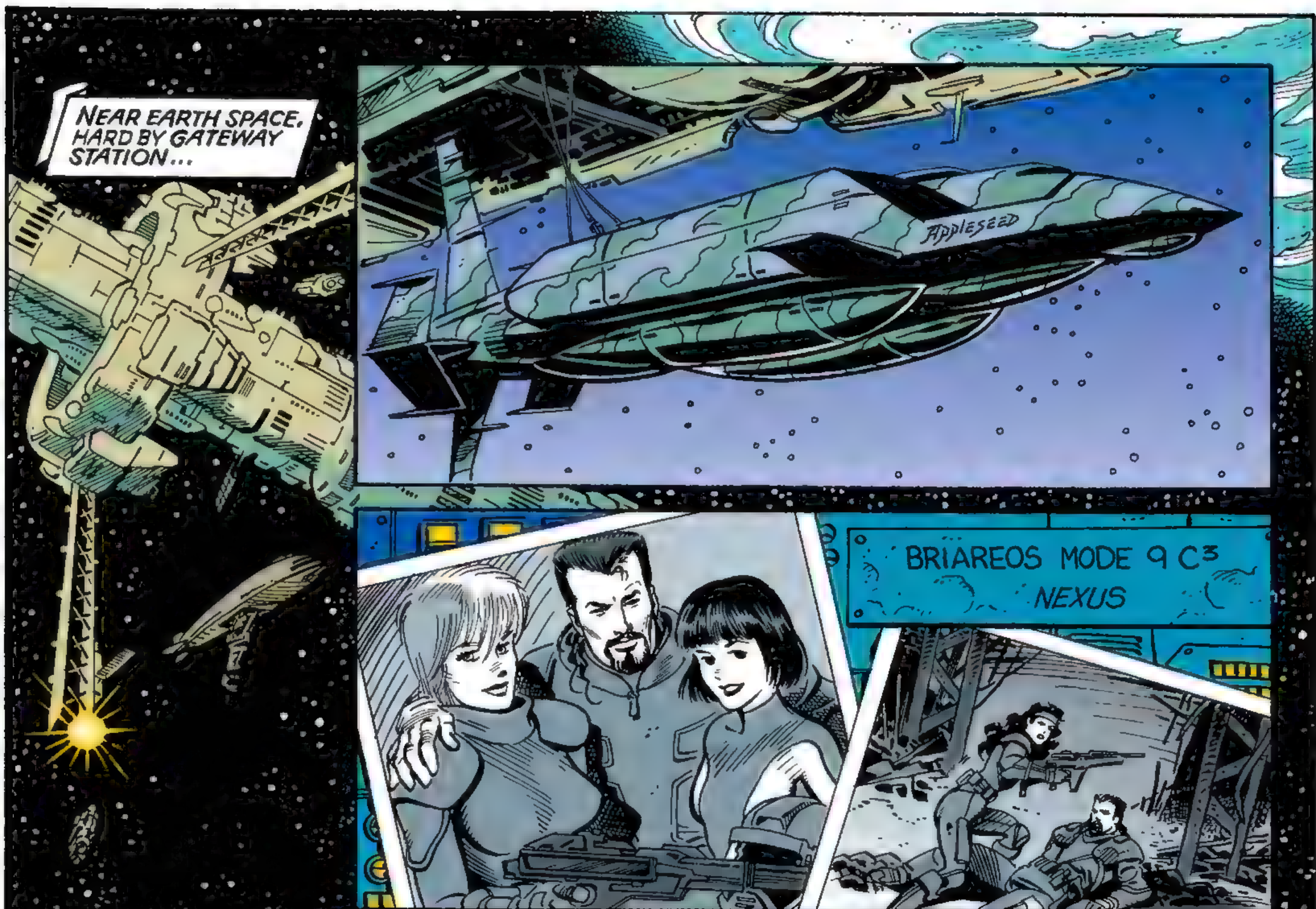
ONLY ONE PROBLEM, I'M AFRAID.

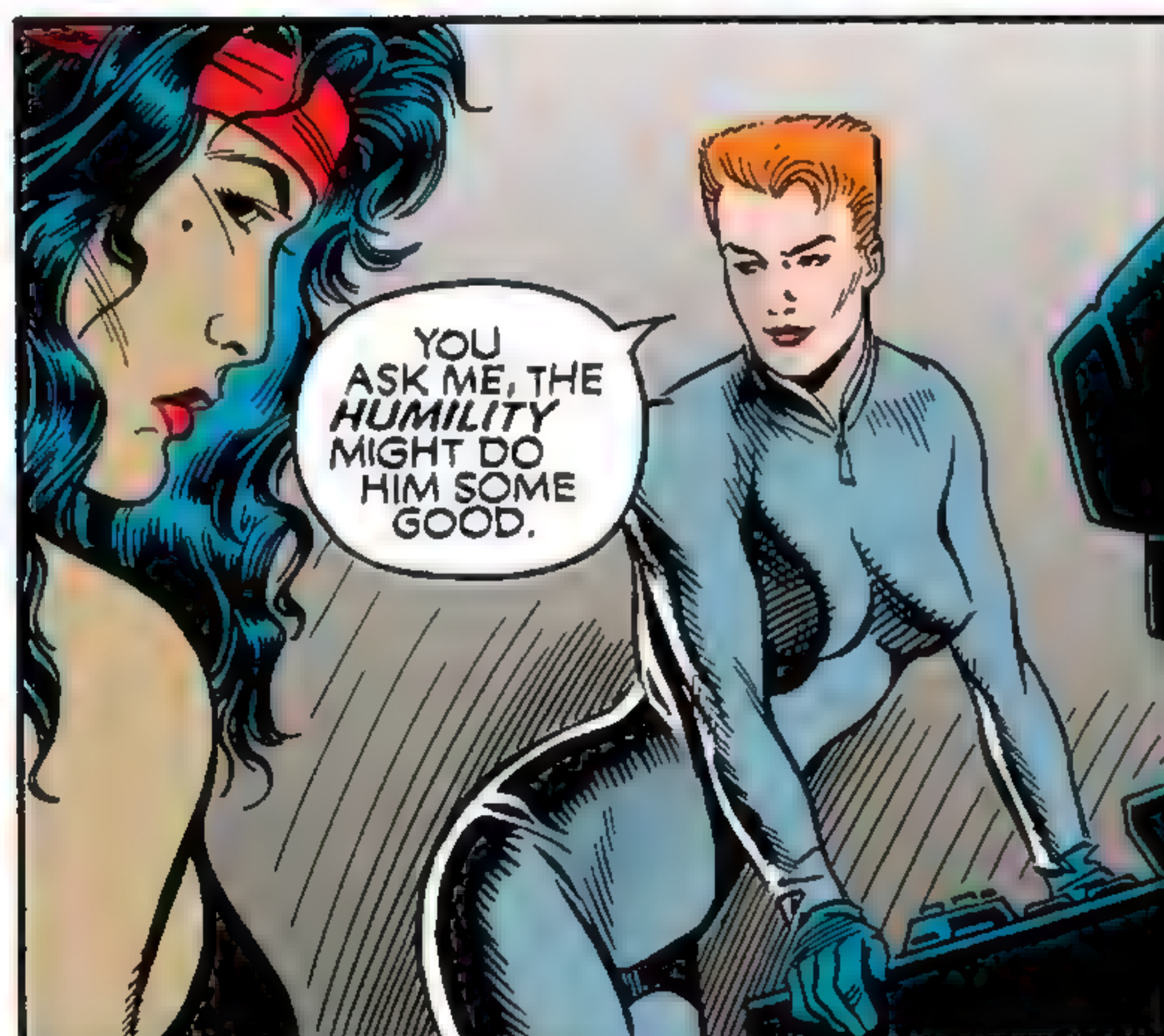
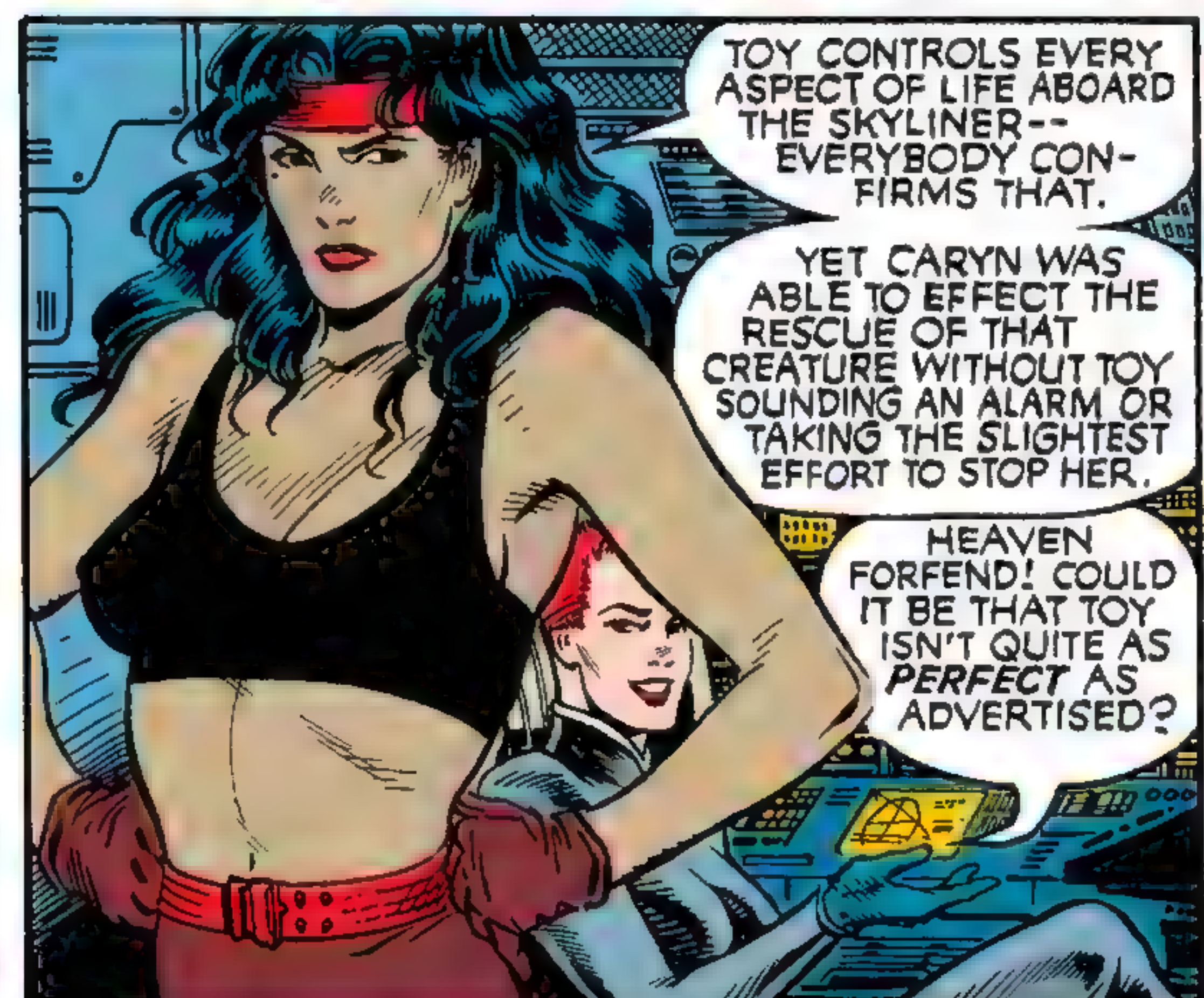
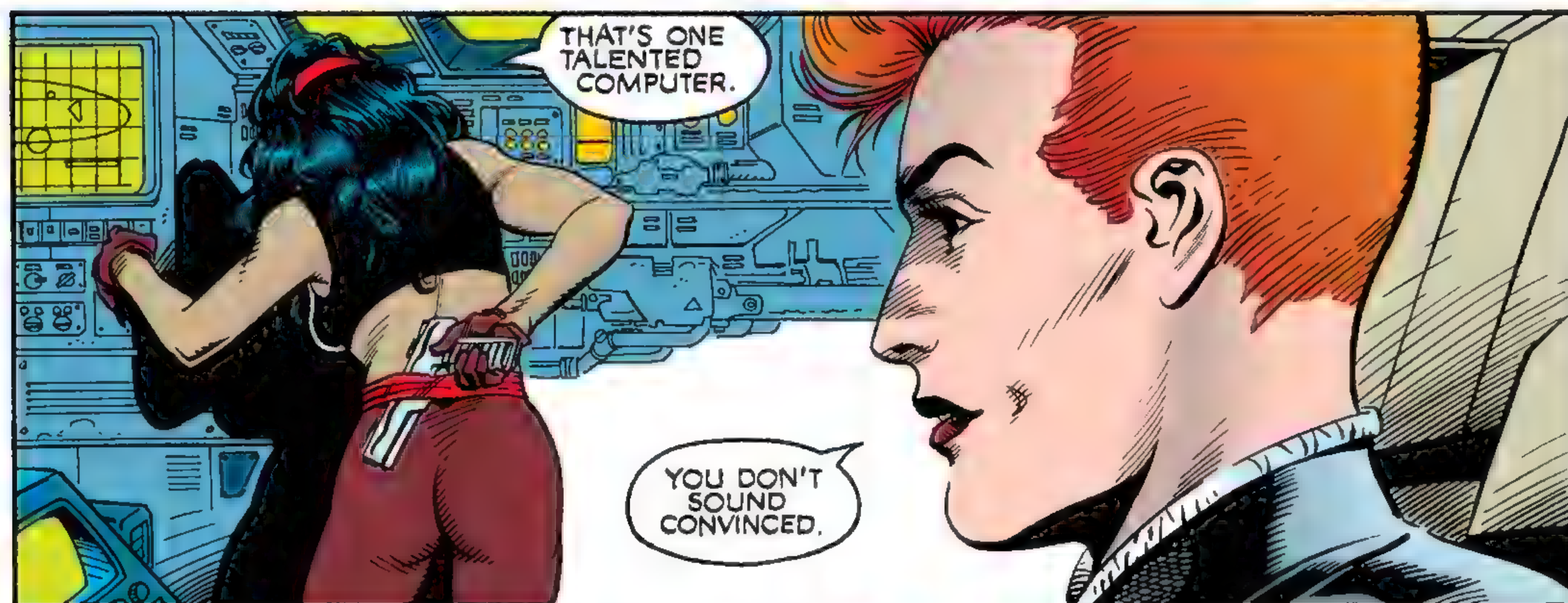
NOW THAT I'M BLESSED WITH ALL THIS KNOWLEDGE--

--WHAT THE HELL AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITH IT?!











CONSIDERING THE POWER TOY WIELDS OVER THE SKYLINER'S OPERATION, DOESN'T THAT CONCERN YOU?

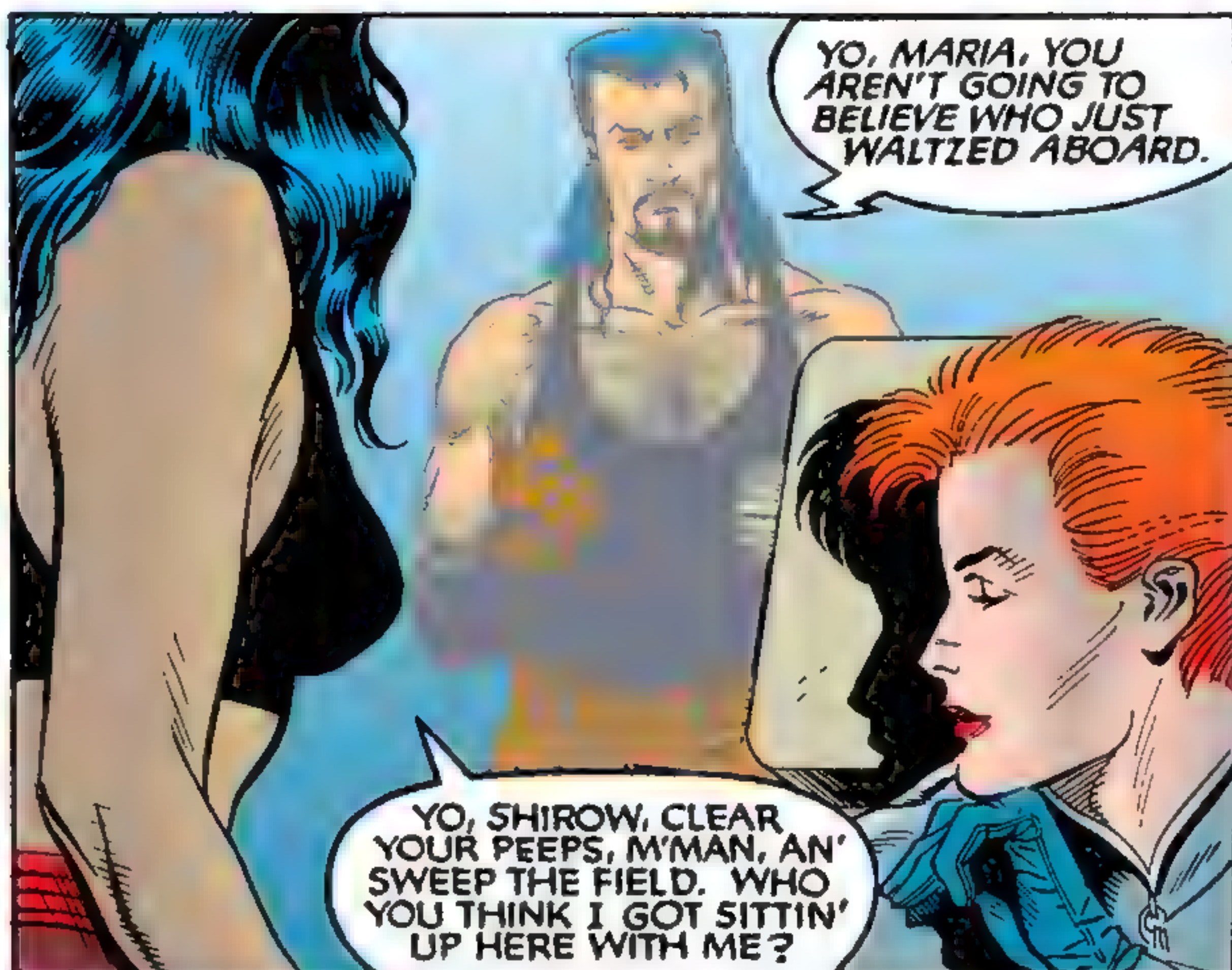
LIBERTÉ ISN'T A WARSHIP, MARIA, AND TOY ISN'T A BATTLE NETWORK. MONTCALM-DELACROIX IS AN ENTERTAINMENT CONGLOMERATE. BASICALLY, TOY'S ROLE IS TO HELP MAKE MOVIES.

ALWAYS ASSUMING HE ISN'T WORKING ON A SURPRISE SCENARIO ALL HIS OWN.



IMPOSSIBLE. FOR ALL HIS SOPHISTICATION, TOY IS STILL ONLY A COMPUTER. HE'S LIMITED BY HIS CORE PROGRAMMING.

IF YOU SAY SO.



YO, MARIA, YOU AREN'T GOING TO BELIEVE WHO JUST WALTZED ABOARD.

YO, SHIROW, CLEAR YOUR PEEPS, M'AN, AN' SWEEP THE FIELD. WHO YOU THINK I GOT SITTING UP HERE WITH ME?



SHE JUST BROUGHT OUR ORDERS.

I KNOW. I JUST SCANNED THE COPY DOWNLOADED INTO MY BUFFER. IT SAYS SHE'S PART OF THE TEAM.

WE WORK ALONE, MS. SALAZAR.



SO I TOLD LUCIEN.

AT LONG LAST, I WAS ALLOWED TO SEE YOUR DOSSIERS. I WAS IMPRESSED. I WAS ALSO OVER- RULED.

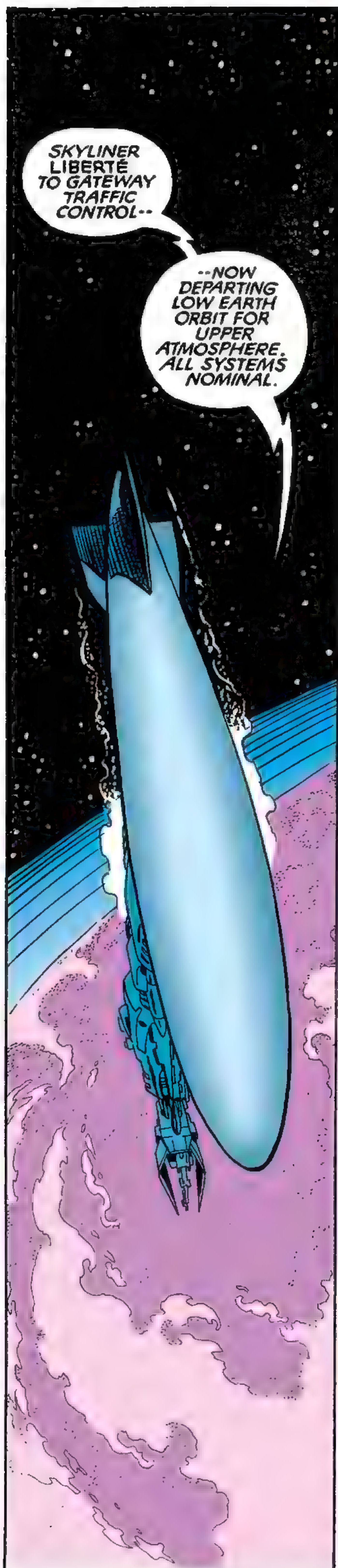
BOTH OF YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND. LUCIEN DELACROIX IS HEAD OF THIS CORPORATION. YOU HAVE NO IDEA OF THE EXTENT OF HIS POWER. AND YOU REALLY DON'T WANT TO FIND OUT.

HE WANTS HIS TROPHY BACK-- NO QUESTIONS, NO EXCUSES --AND HE'S PREPARED TO DO WHATEVER'S NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE THAT GOAL.

IF WE WANT OUR LIVES BACK, FREE AND CLEAR...

...THEN WE DO AS WE'RE TOLD. AND PRAY WE'RE NOT ALREADY TOO LATE.

W. WOOD SPACECRAFT CO.

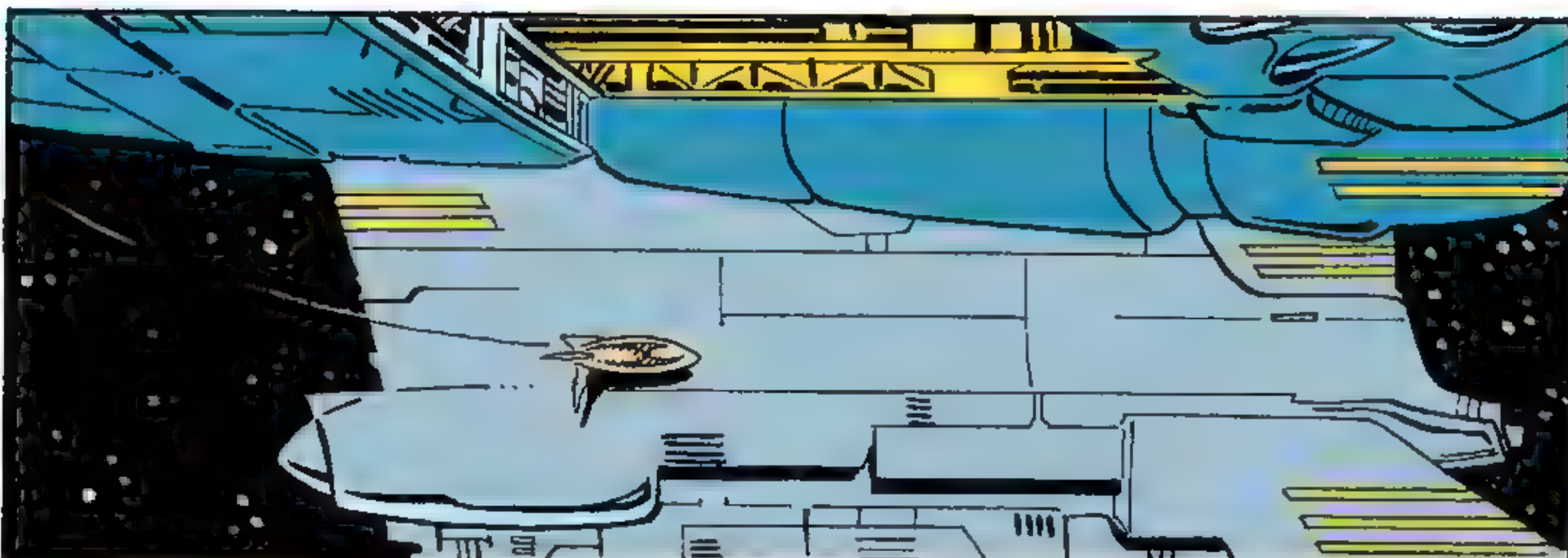


SKYLINER
LIBERTÉ
TO GATEWAY
TRAFFIC
CONTROL--

--NOW
DEPARTING
LOW EARTH
ORBIT FOR
UPPER
ATMOSPHERE.
ALL SYSTEMS
NOMINAL.

ATTENTION:

The security
of this vessel is
the responsibility
of all aboard.
Vigilance is
safety.



PROFESSOR DeMATIER--
WHAT THE DEVIL--?!

AND A VERY GOOD
EVENING TO YOU,
TOO, DEAR BOY.

HOW
DID YOU GET
IN HERE?!



WE DO BELIEVE
THE DOOR WAS
OPEN.

MY DOOR
IS NEVER
OPEN--

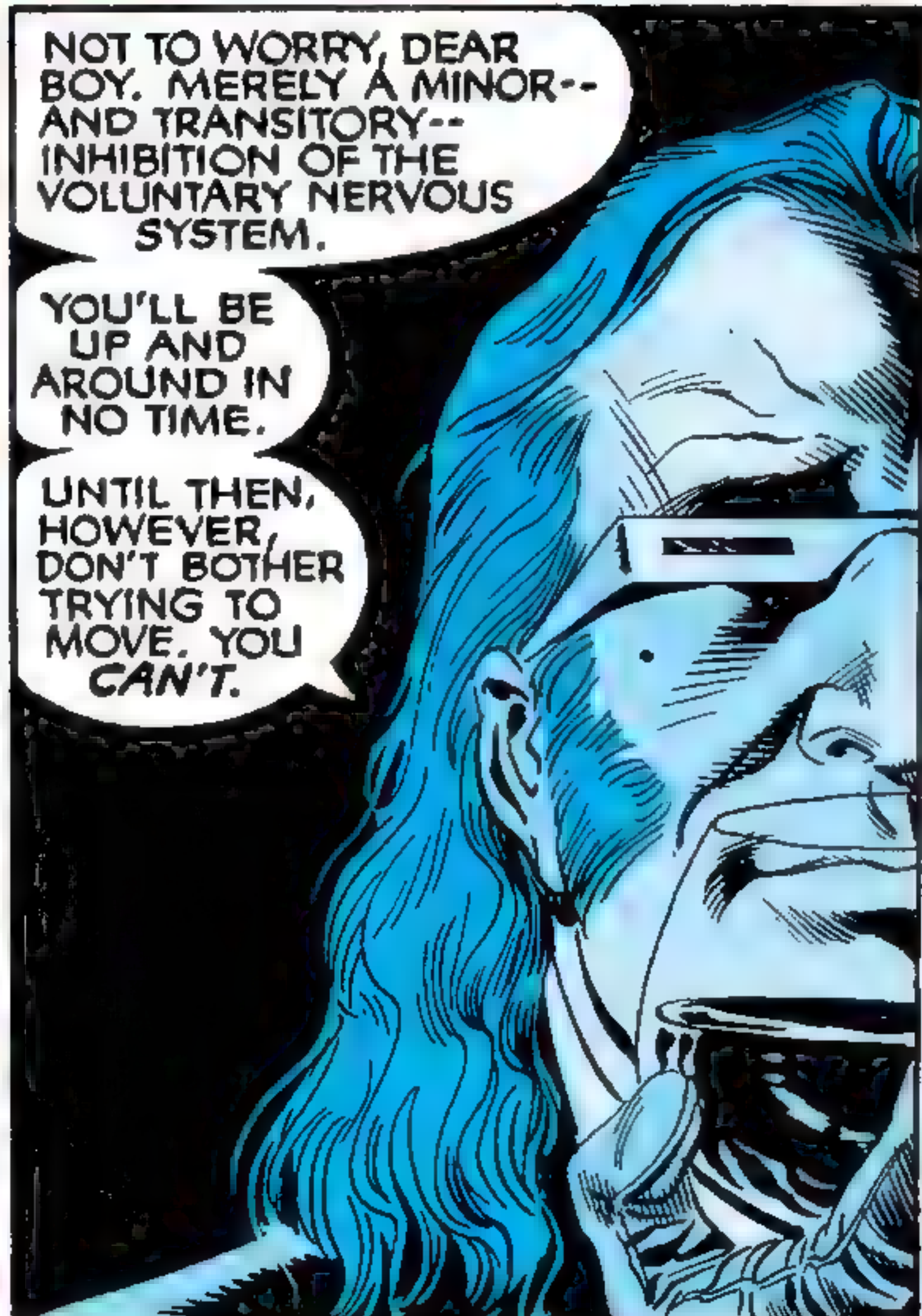
--WHAT'S
WRONG,
HERE?!
WHY
CAN'T I
MOVE?!



NOT TO WORRY, DEAR
BOY. MERELY A MINOR--
AND TRANSITORY--
INHIBITION OF THE
VOLUNTARY NERVOUS
SYSTEM.

YOU'LL BE
UP AND
AROUND IN
NO TIME.

UNTIL THEN,
HOWEVER,
DON'T BOTHER
TRYING TO
MOVE. YOU
CAN'T.



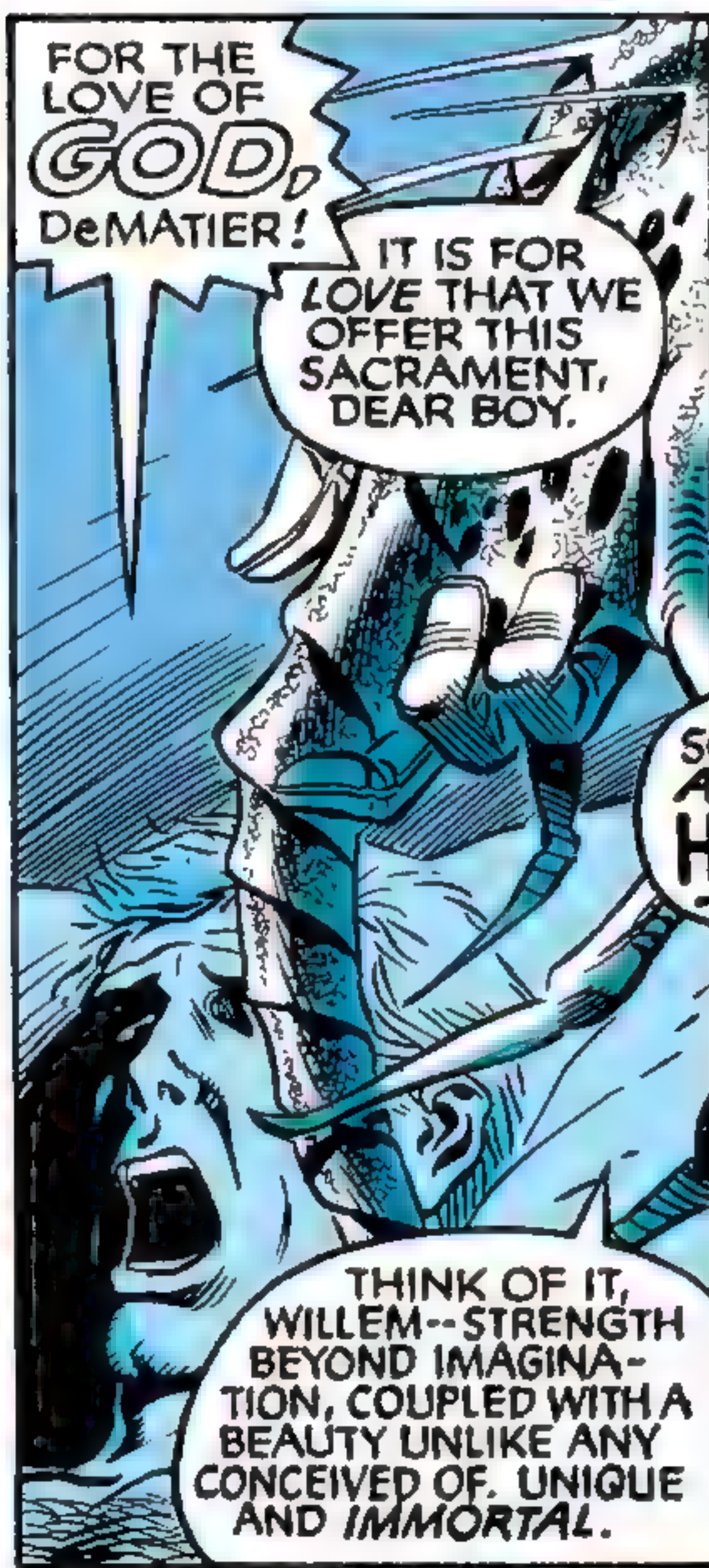




WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!

THINK OF IT AS AN END TO SUFFERING.

A TRANSFIGURATION OF THE FLESH TO A MORE GLORIOUS STATE OF BEING.



FOR THE LOVE OF **GOD**, DeMATIER!

IT IS FOR LOVE THAT WE OFFER THIS SACRAMENT, DEAR BOY.

THINK OF IT, WILLEM--STRENGTH BEYOND IMAGINATION, COUPLED WITH A BEAUTY UNLIKE ANY CONCEIVED OF. UNIQUE AND IMMORTAL.

SOMEONE-- ANYONE-- **HELP ME!**



THEY CAN'T HEAR YOU, WILLEM. NO ONE WILL COME.

LEAST OF ALL YOUR FATHER'S ELECTRONIC AMANUENSIS.

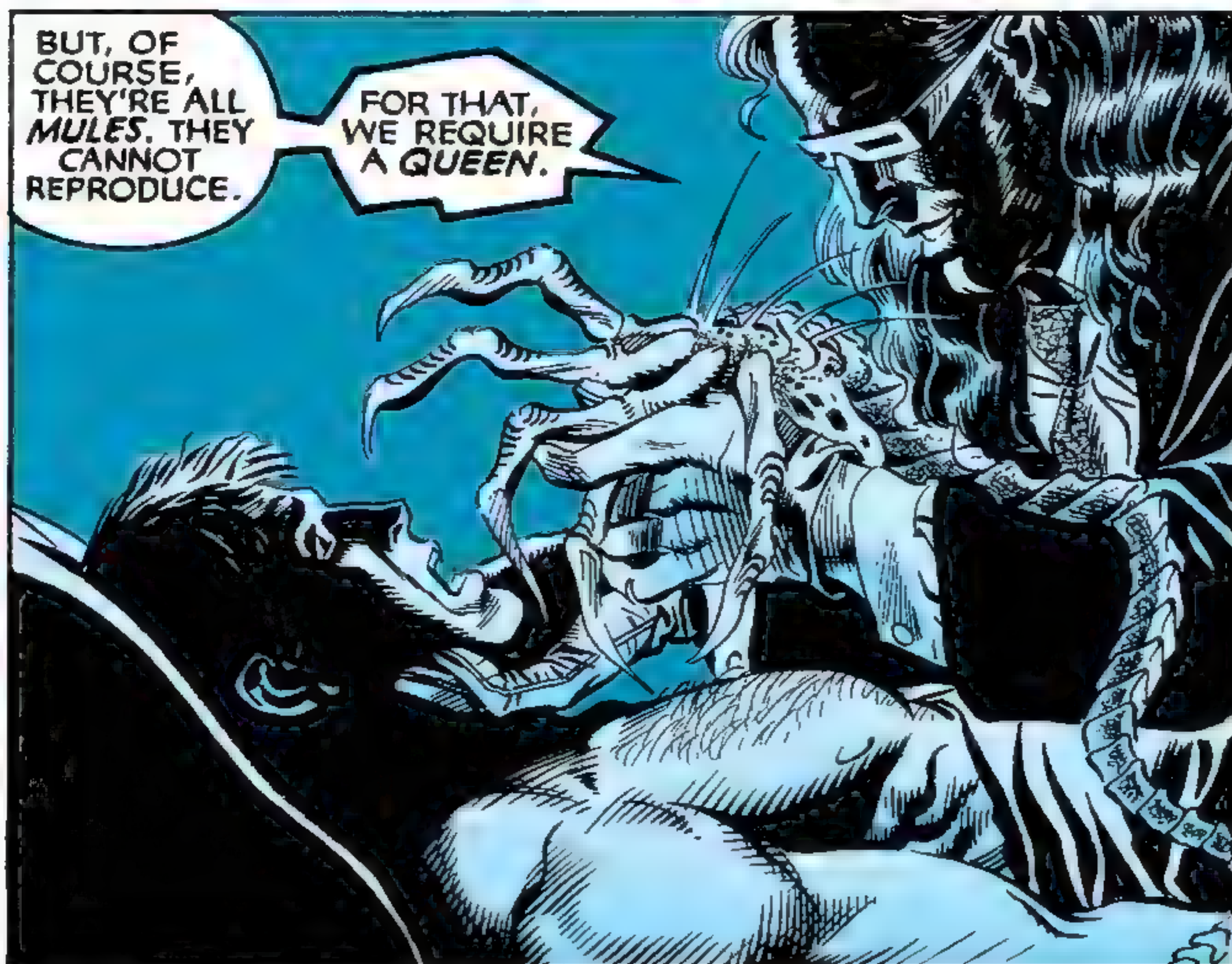
TOY!



PROFESSOR, PLEASE, DON'T DO THIS. I THOUGHT WE WERE PARTNERS-- I THOUGHT WE WERE **FRIENDS!**

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?!

REGRETTABLY, DEAR BOY, WE HAVE RUN INTO SOMETHING OF A ROADBLOCK WITH THE PROJECT. WE HAVE BECOME QUITE PROFICIENT IN THE PRODUCTION OF **DRONES**.



BUT, OF COURSE, THEY'RE ALL **MULES**. THEY CANNOT REPRODUCE.

FOR THAT, WE REQUIRE A **QUEEN**.



NO!



IS ANYTHING *AMISS*, WILLEM?

SCAN THE SUITE, **TOY!** IS THERE ANY SIGN OF **INTRUDERS?**

NOT IN THE SLIGHTEST. ALL HEREIN IS AS IT SHOULD BE.

SHALL I SUMMON OFFICERS OF THE SECURITATE TO CONDUCT A FURTHER INSPECTION?



NO. NO. THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY.

MUST HAVE BEEN THAT DAMN SCRIPT YOU HAD ME READ-- GAVE ME NIGHTMARES.

I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS-- BUT I'M ALL **RIGHT NOW**.

IT WAS ONLY A **DREAM**.

THE NEXT
TIME BIG
MAMA
COMES
FOR ME...

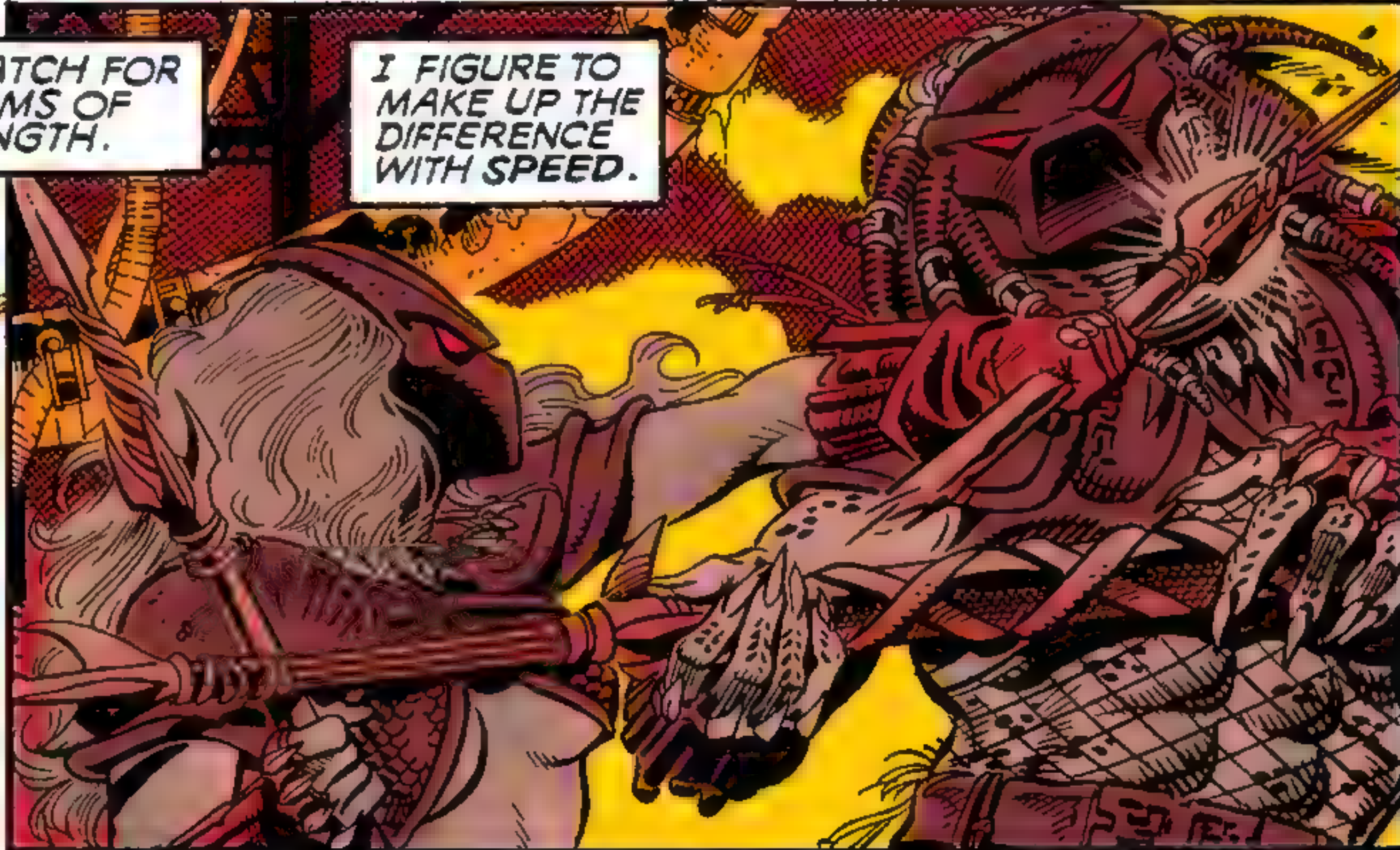
...I FIGURE-- I'M SURE--
I'LL BE READY!



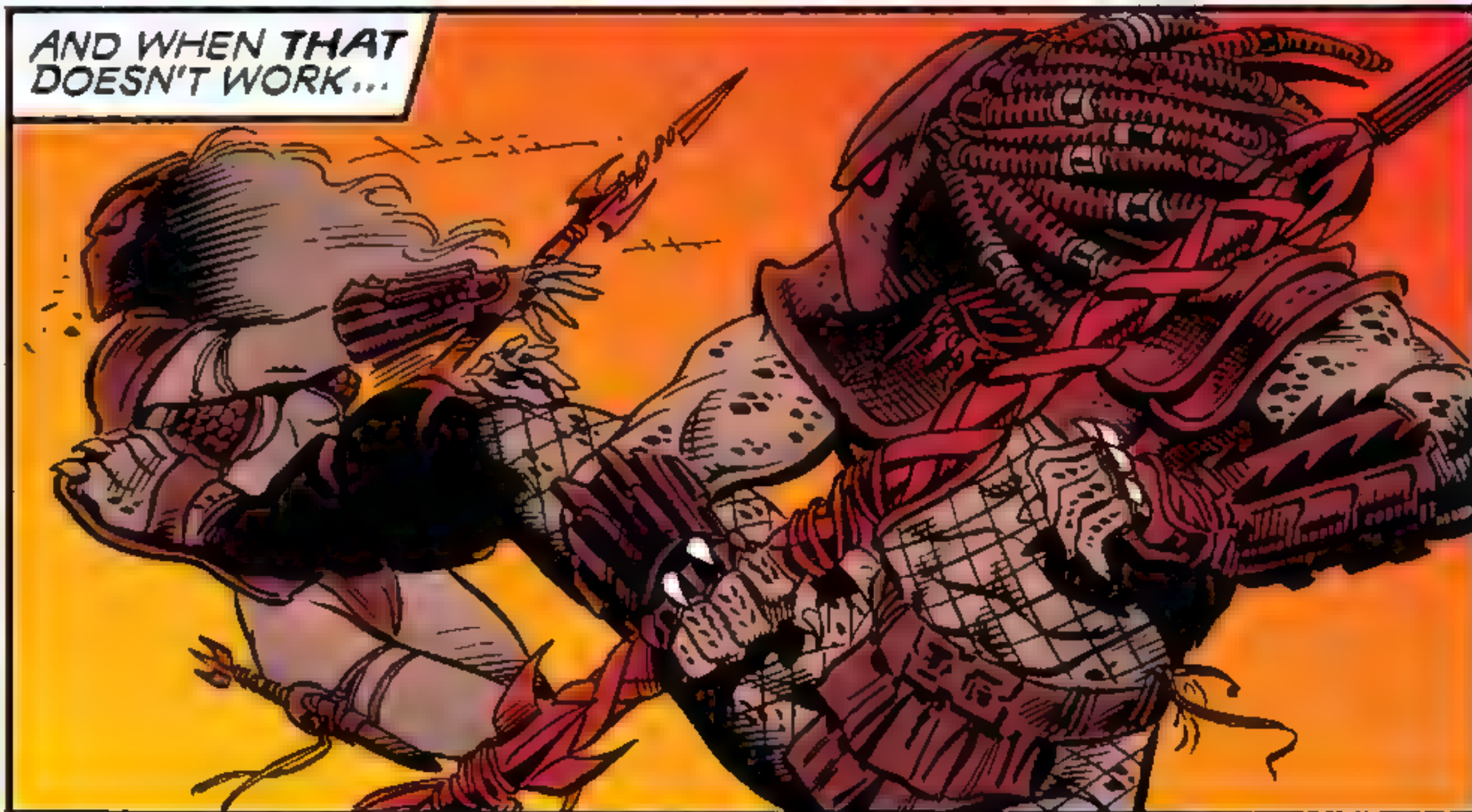
OF COURSE,
SHE HAS
OTHER
IDEAS.

I'M NO MATCH FOR
HER IN TERMS OF
RAW STRENGTH.

I FIGURE TO
MAKE UP THE
DIFFERENCE
WITH SPEED.



AND WHEN THAT
DOESN'T WORK...



...I TRY
SNEAKY.



BEFORE I HIT
THE FLOOR, THE
CHAMELEON
FIELD MAKES
ME FUNCTIONALLY
INVISIBLE.

AT
WHICH
POINT...



...I GET
THE
HELL
OUT
OF HER
WAY!



WE'RE FIGHTING HAND TO HAND.

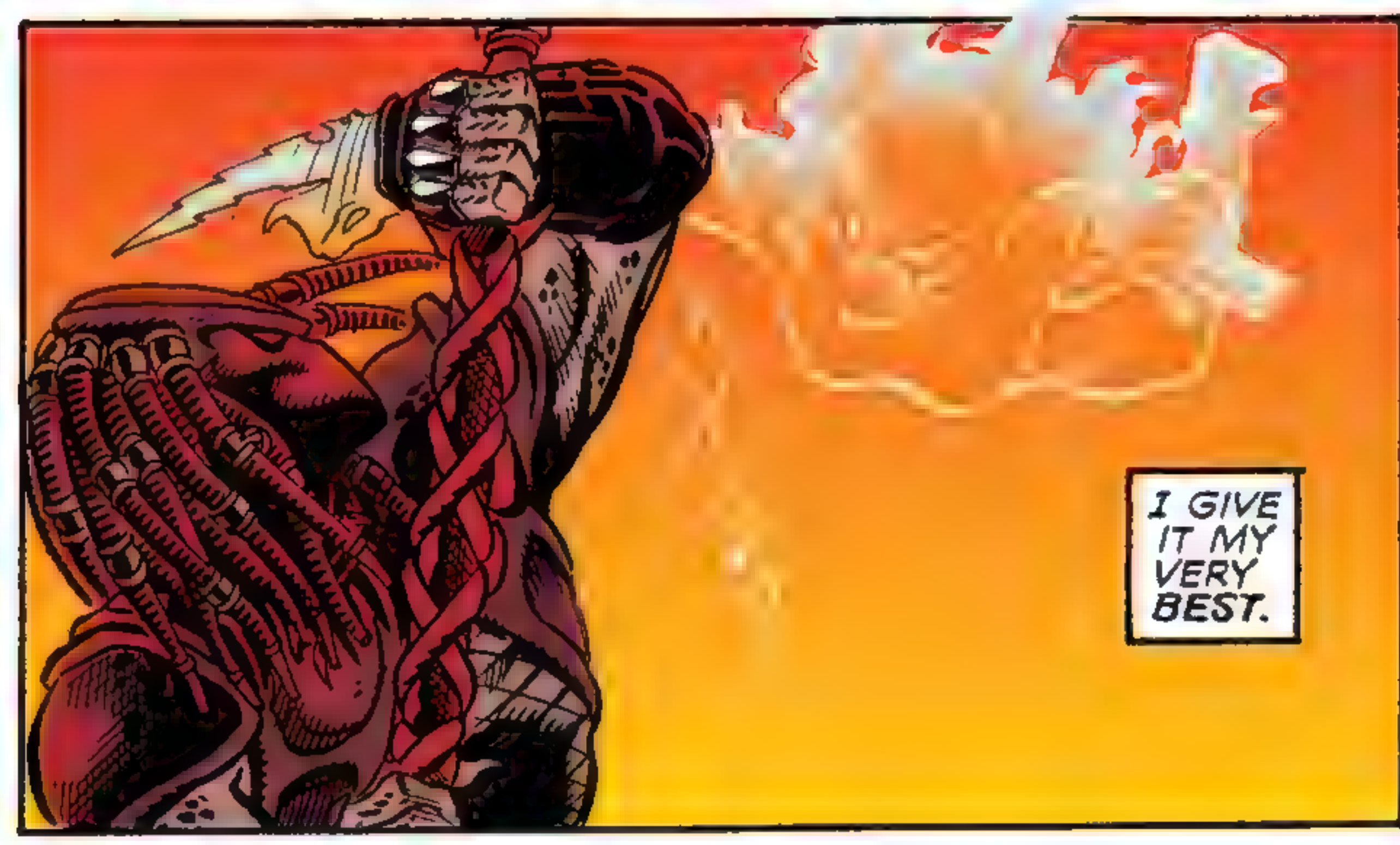
NO WEAPON WITH A REACH LONGER THAN OUR ARMS.



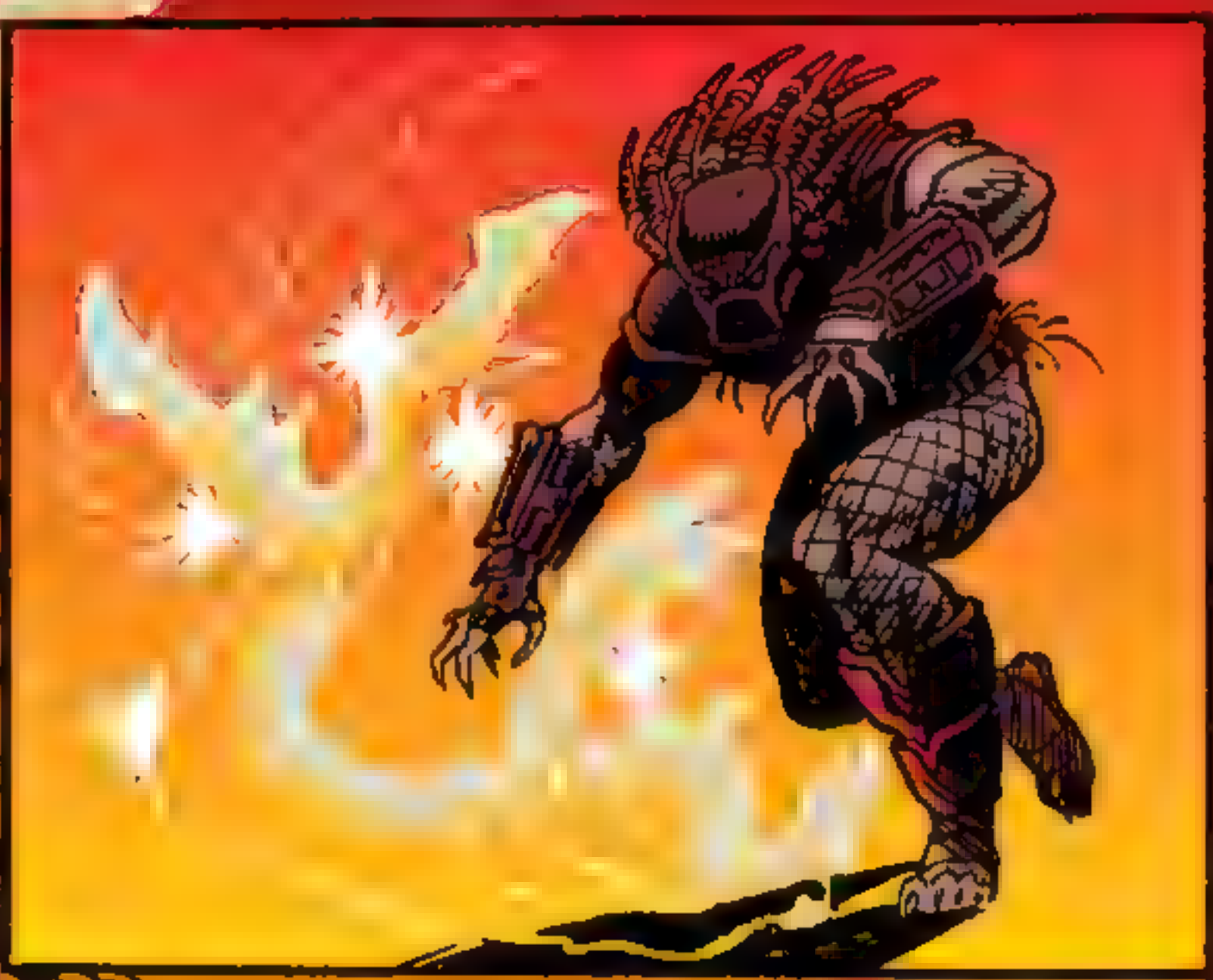
WE BOTH KNOW, IF I HAD A PLASMA CASTER, SHE'D BE DEAD.

MY PROBLEM IS, I CAN'T WIN WITHOUT MAKING A MOVE.

THAT'S WHAT SHE'S WAITING FOR.

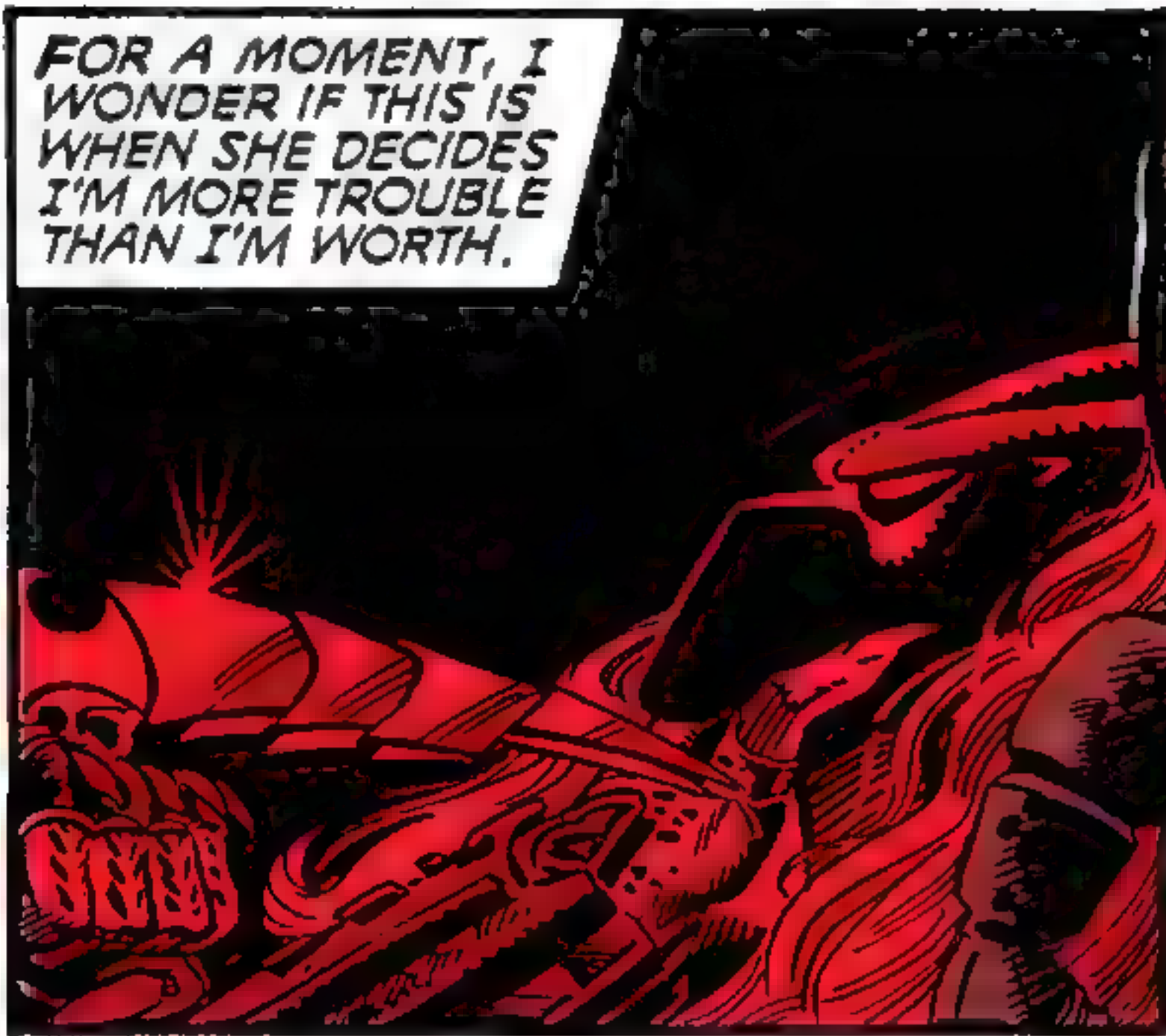


I GIVE IT MY VERY BEST.

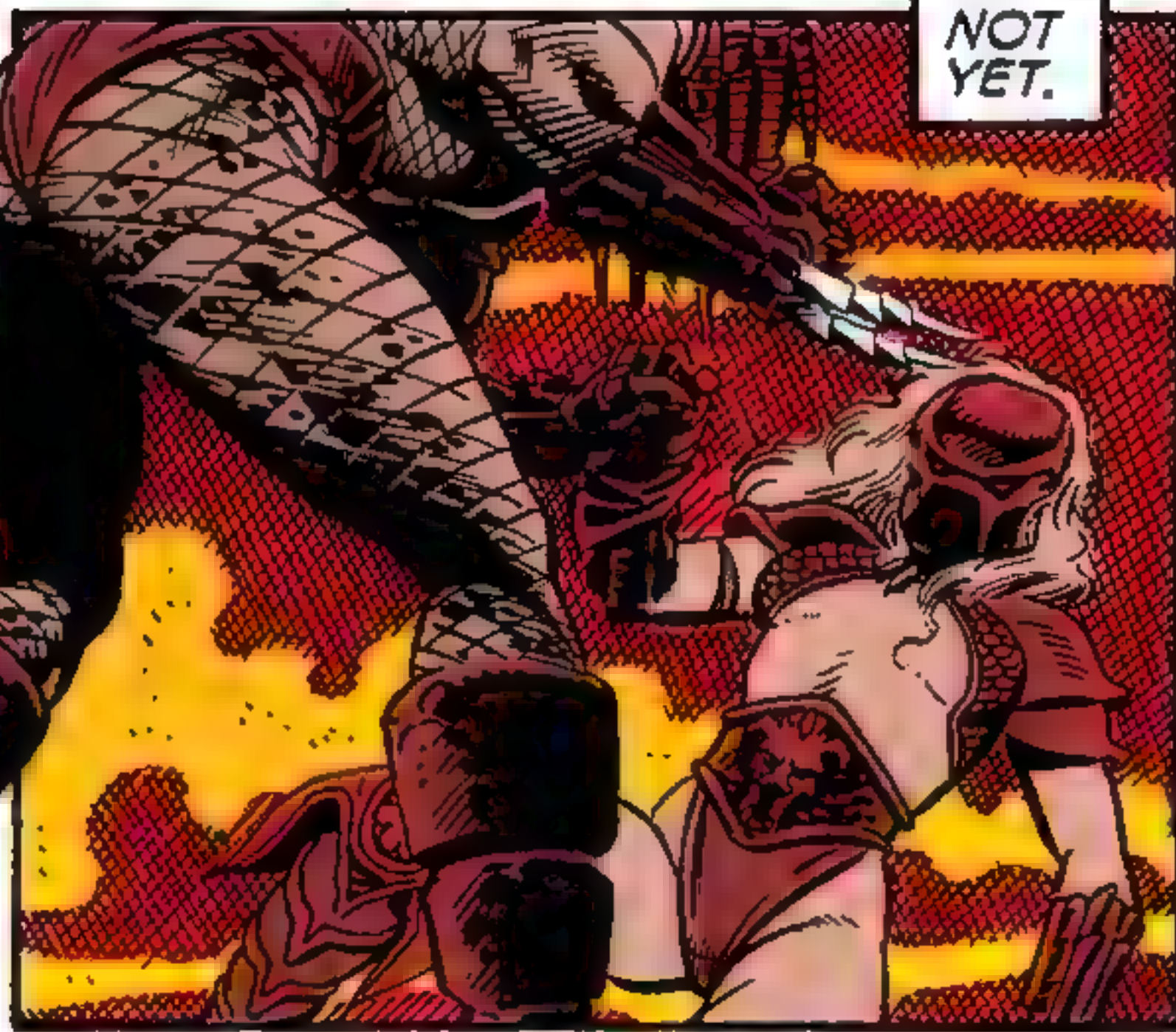


IT'S NOT ENOUGH.

FOR A MOMENT, I WONDER IF THIS IS WHEN SHE DECIDES I'M MORE TROUBLE THAN I'M WORTH.



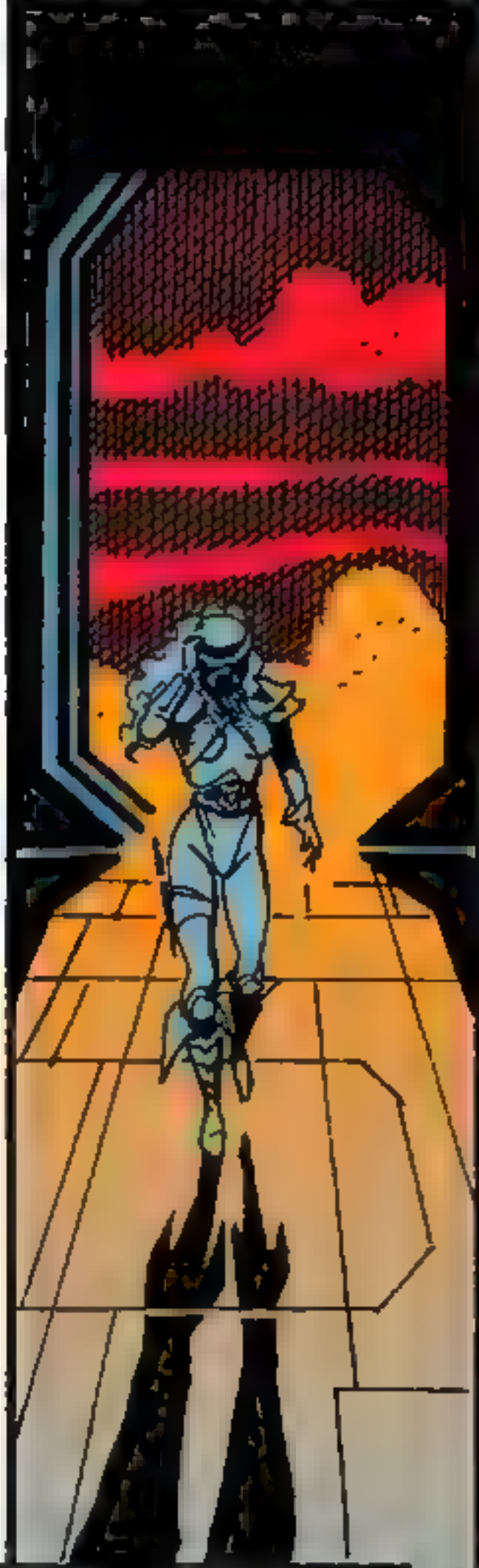
NOT YET.



I MUST BE GETTING BETTER.



I'VE NEVER FELT SO TIRED-- OR SO SORE.

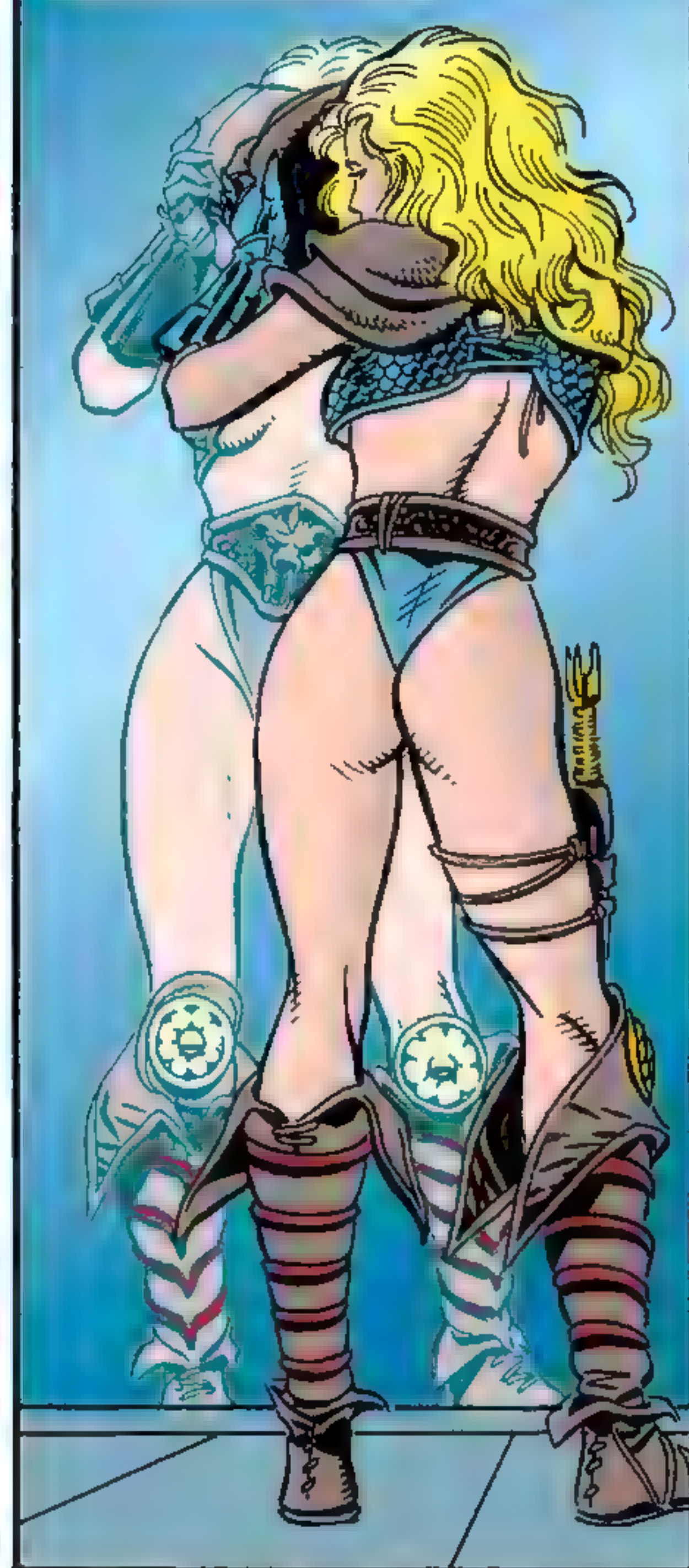


SHE DIDN'T PULL ANY PUNCHES, UNTIL THE END.

MY FIRST MISTAKE WOULD HAVE BEEN MY LAST.

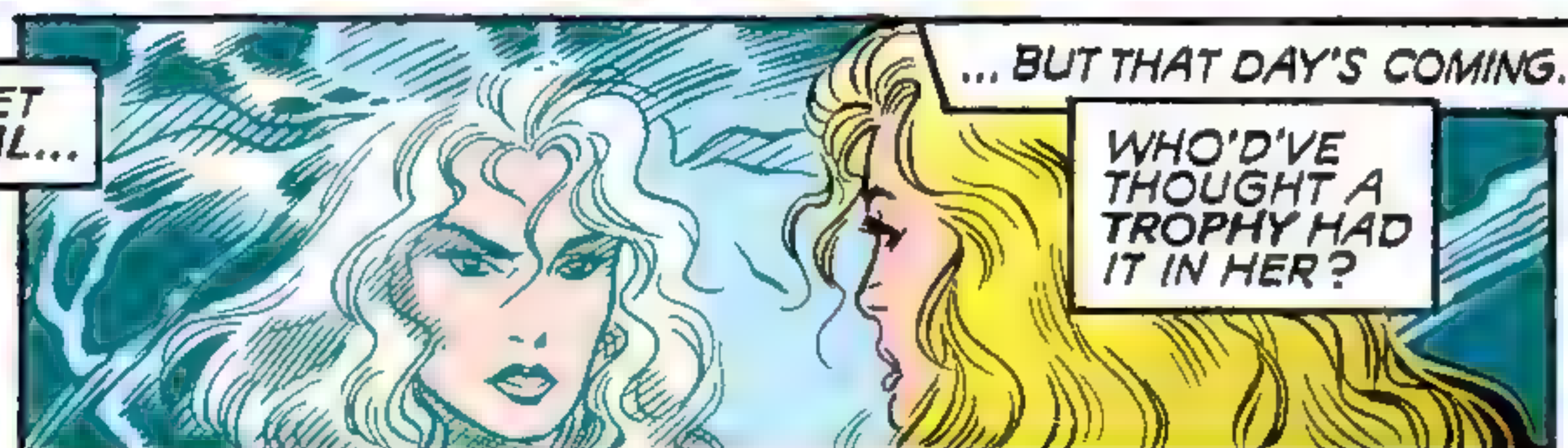
SHE'S TRAINING ME AS SHE WOULD ONE OF HER OWN.

I'M NOT YET HER EQUAL...



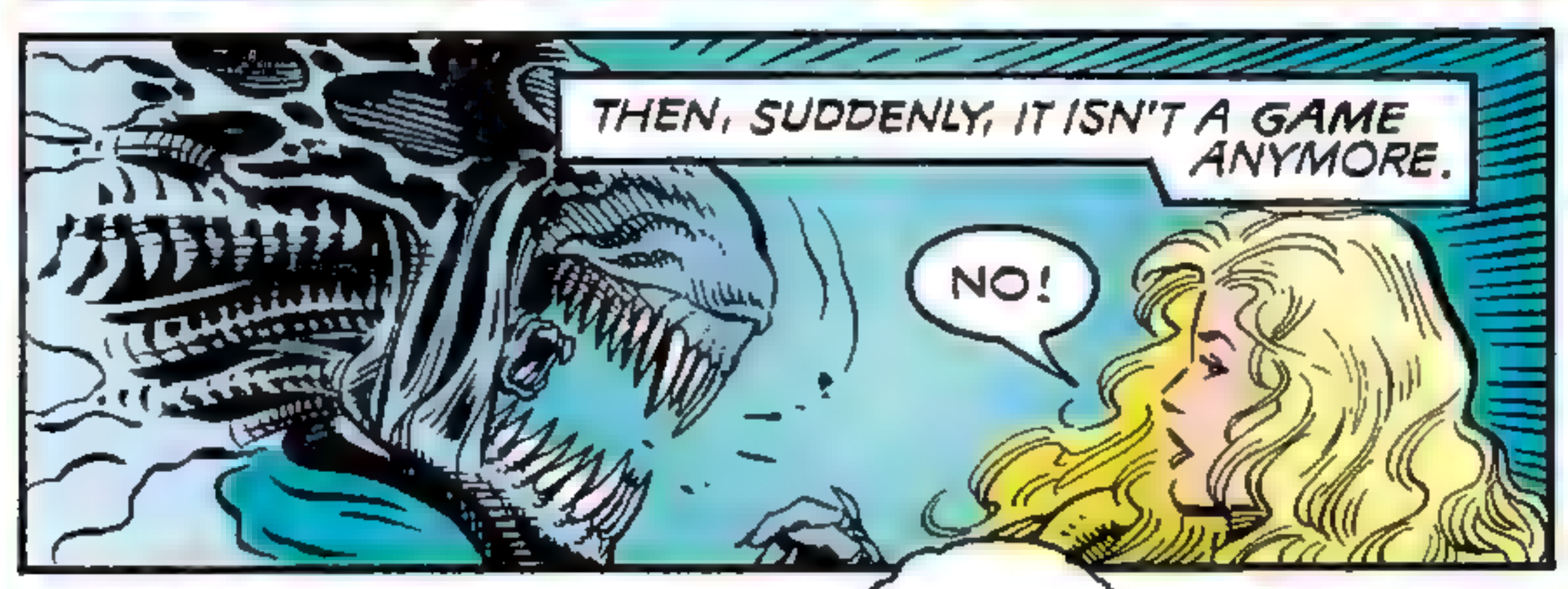
... BUT THAT DAY'S COMING.

WHO'D'VE THOUGHT A TROPHY HAD IT IN HER?

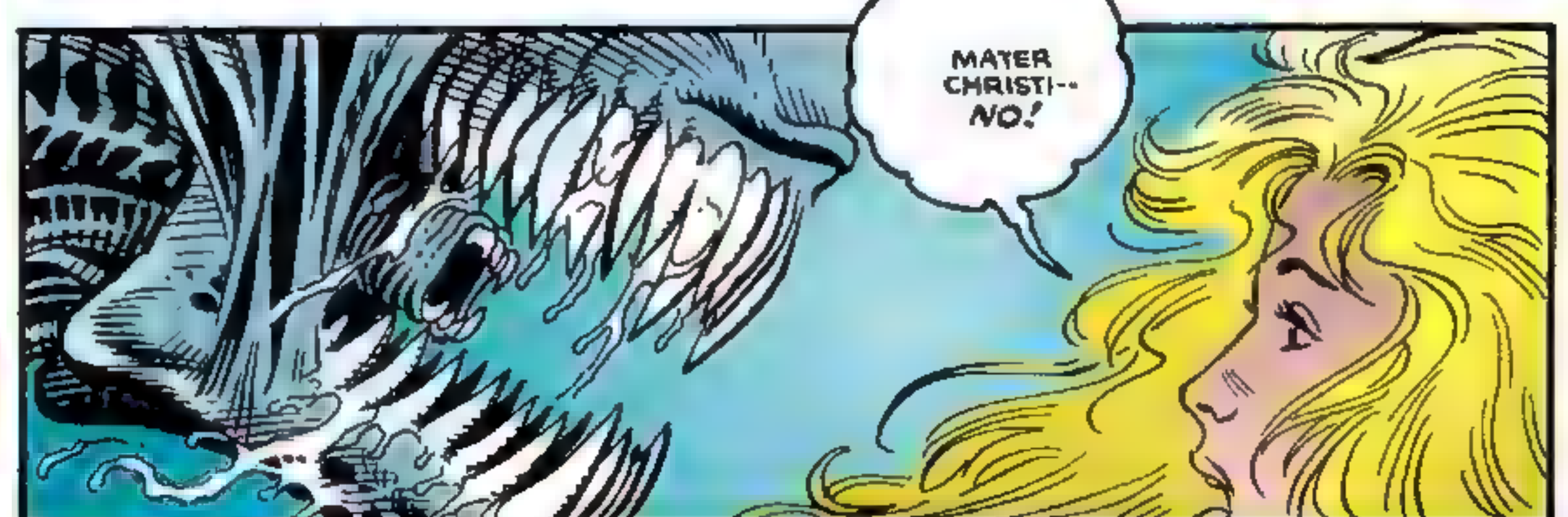


THEN, SUDDENLY, IT ISN'T A GAME ANYMORE.

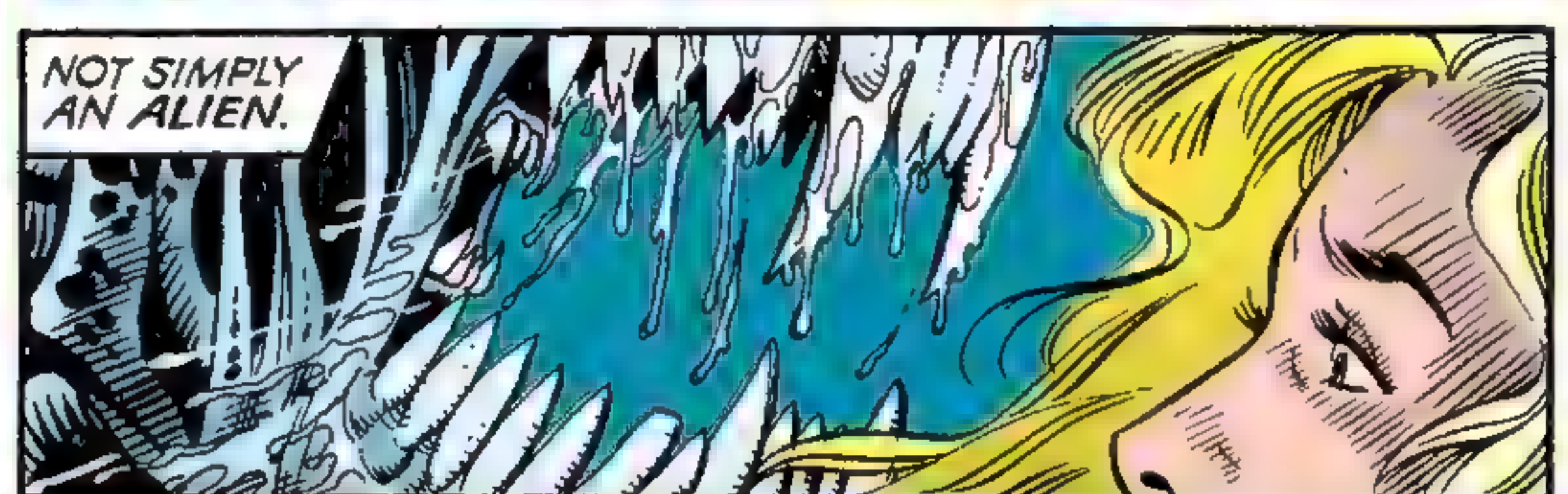
NO!



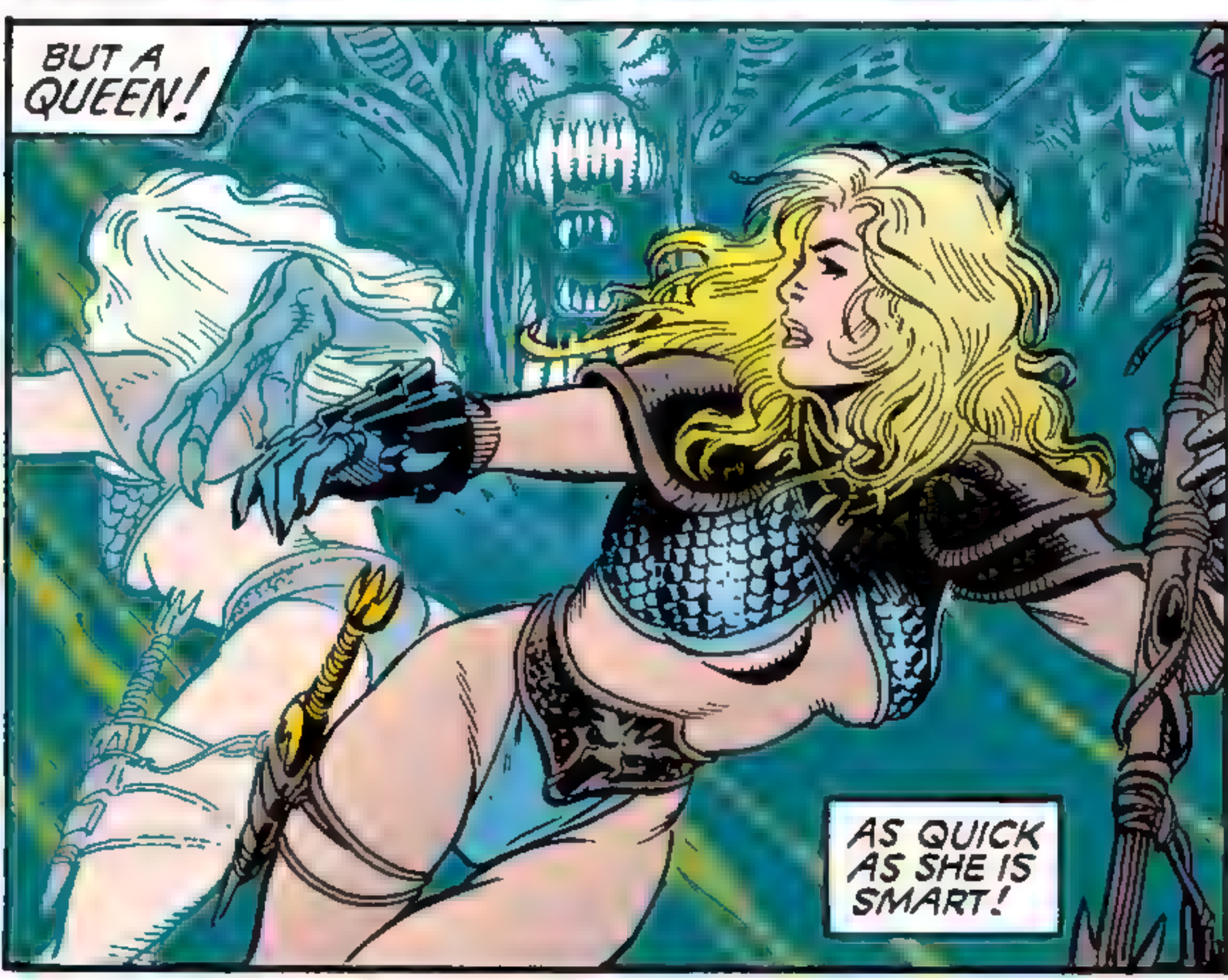
MAYBE CHRISTI-- NO!



NOT SIMPLY AN ALIEN.



BUT A QUEEN!

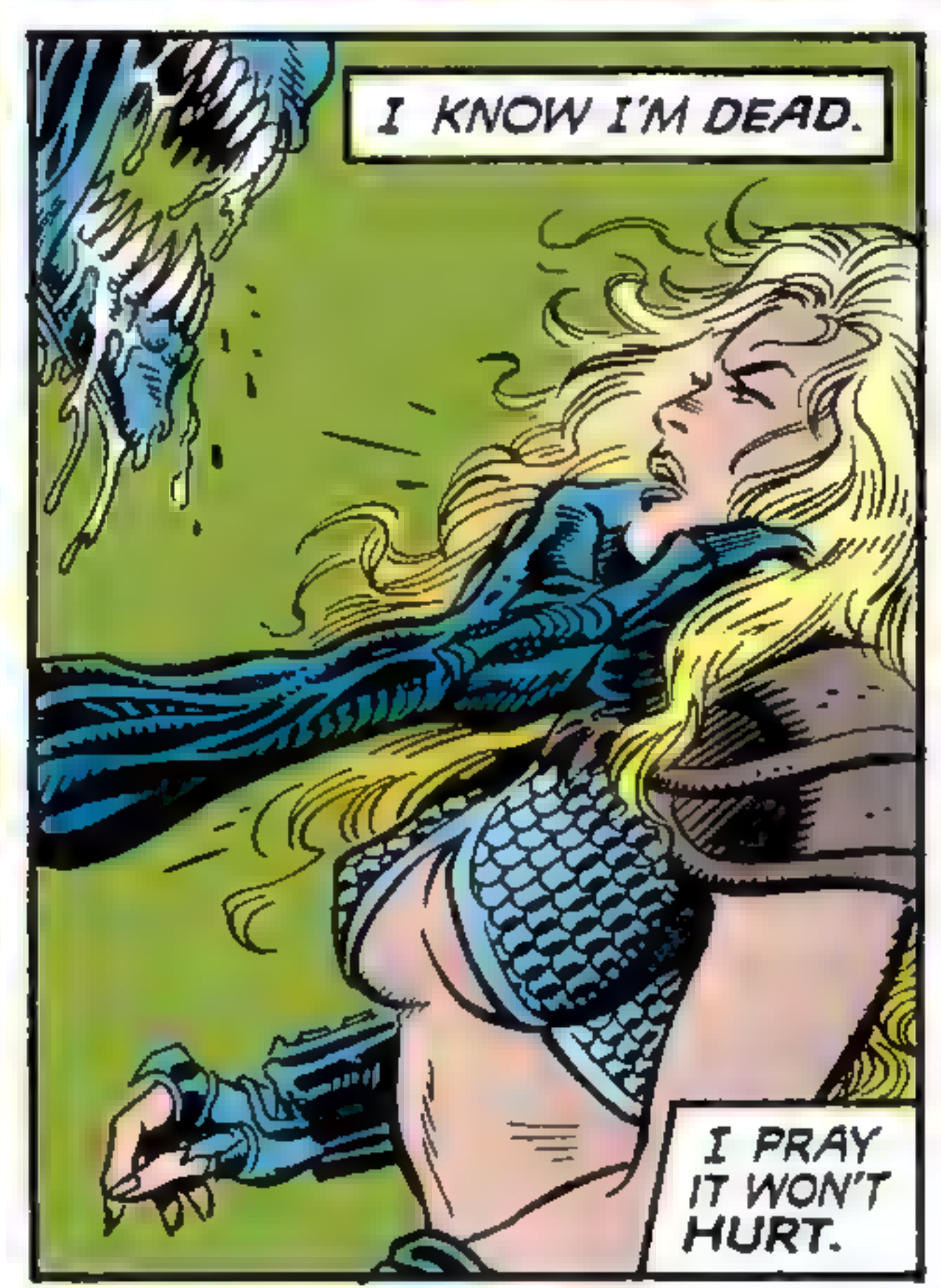


AS QUICK AS SHE IS SMART!

I KNOW I'M DEAD.

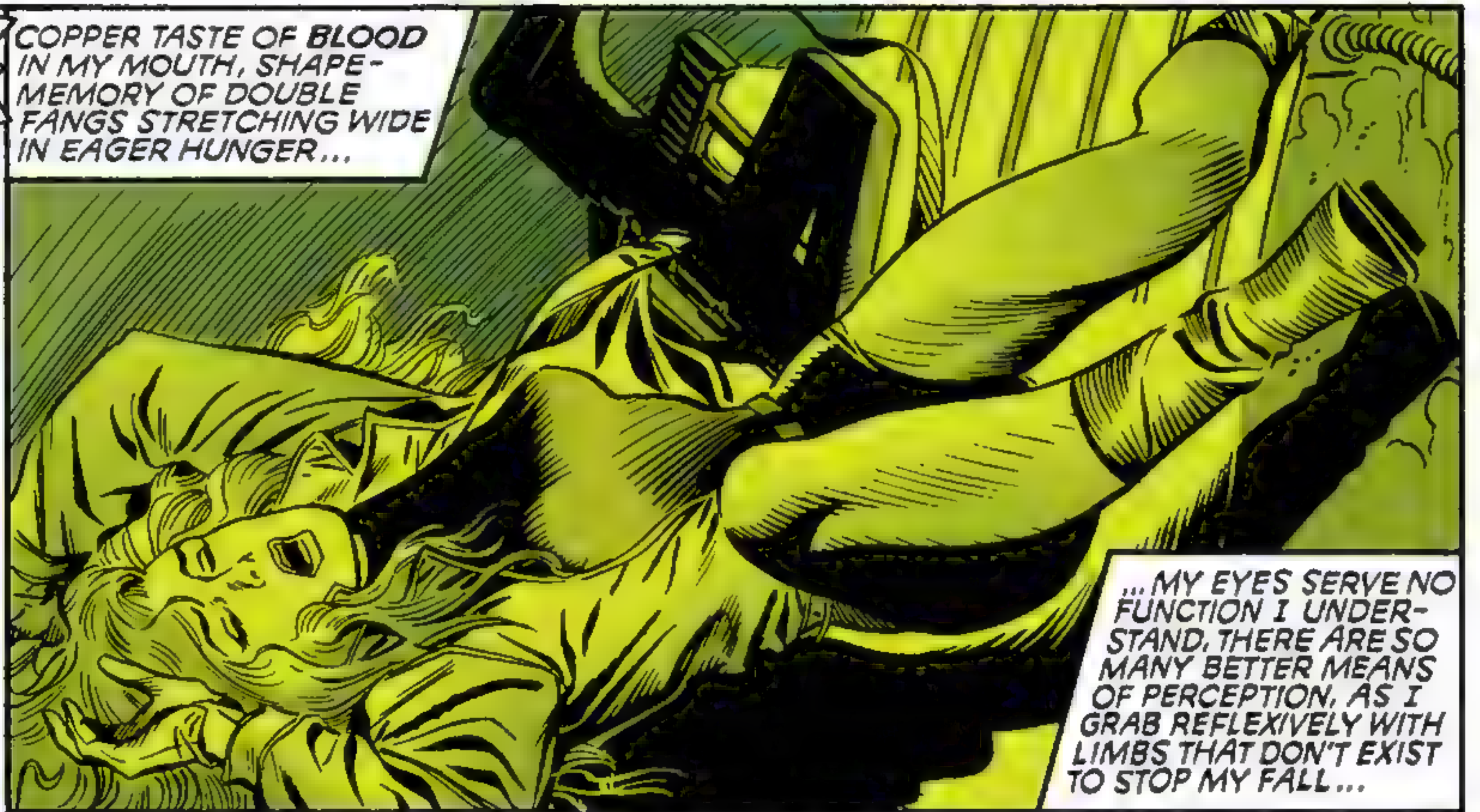


I PRAY IT WON'T HURT.





COPPER TASTE OF BLOOD
IN MY MOUTH, SHAPE-
MEMORY OF DOUBLE
FANGS STRETCHING WIDE
IN EAGER HUNGER...

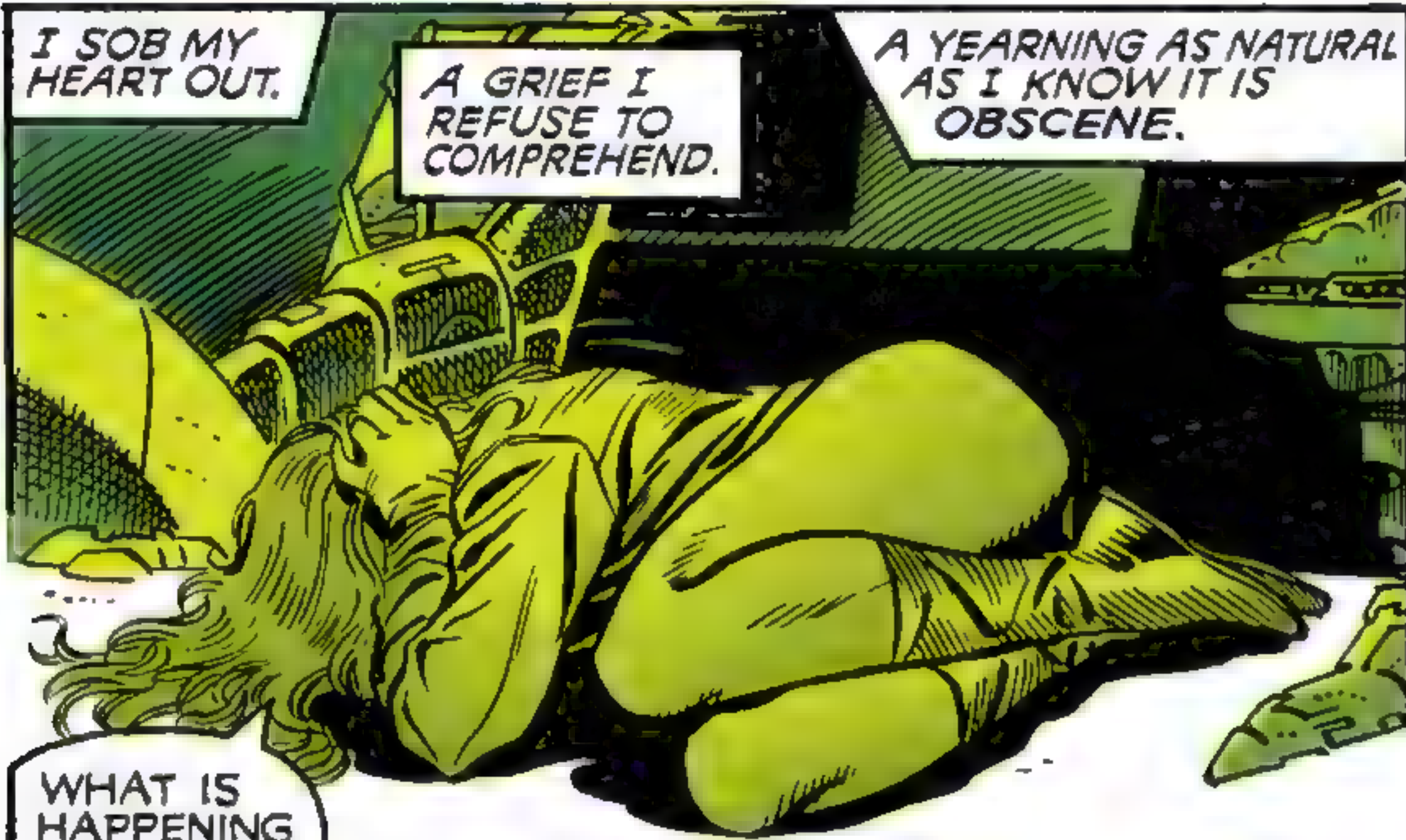


... MY EYES SERVE NO
FUNCTION I UNDER-
STAND. THERE ARE SO
MANY BETTER MEANS
OF PERCEPTION. AS I
GRAB REFLEXIVELY WITH
LIMBS THAT DON'T EXIST
TO STOP MY FALL...

I SOB MY
HEART OUT.

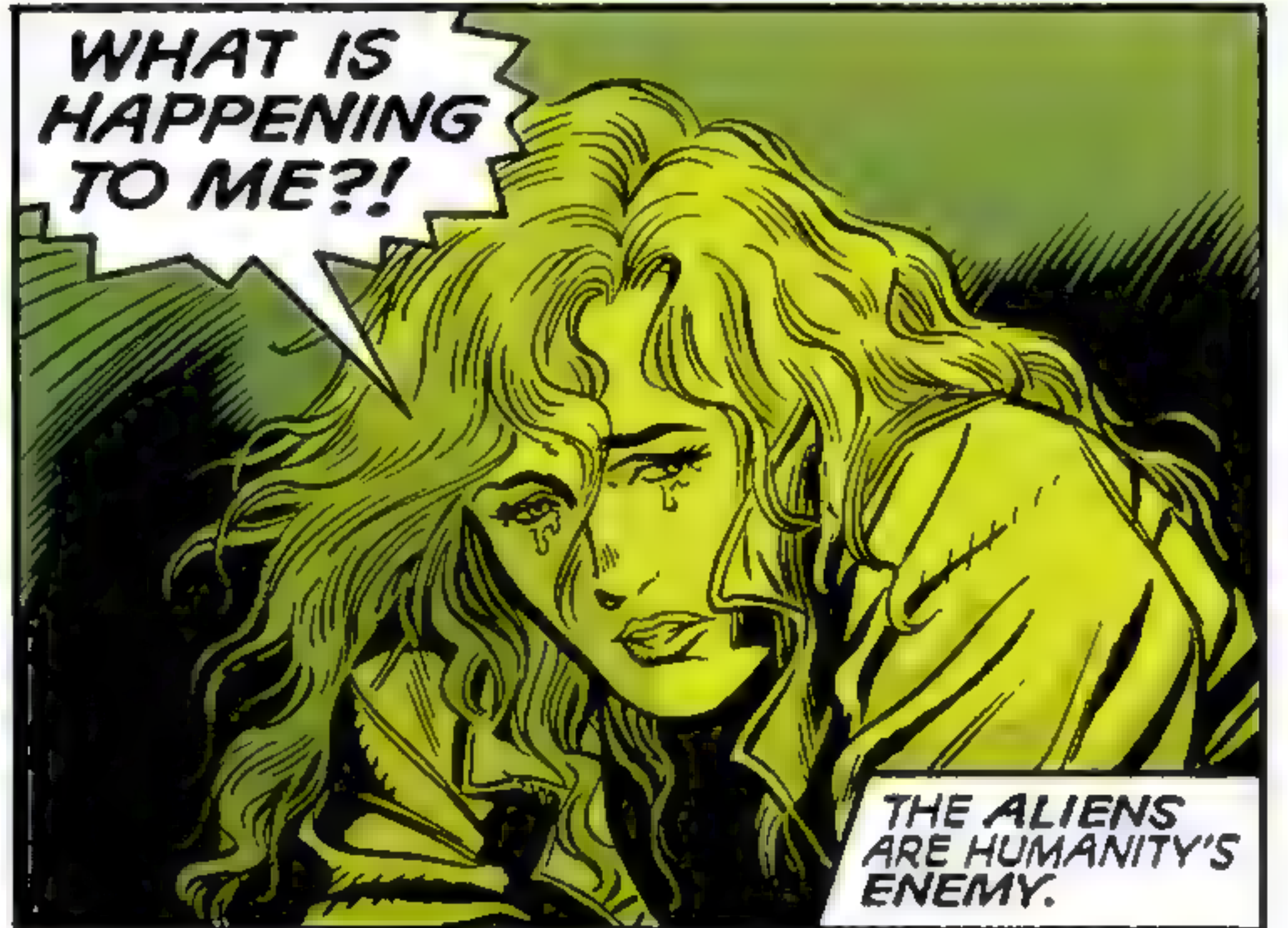
A GRIEF I
REFUSE TO
COMPREHEND.

A YEARNING AS NATURAL
AS I KNOW IT IS
OBSCENE.



WHAT IS
HAPPENING
TO ME?!

WHAT IS
HAPPENING
TO ME?!



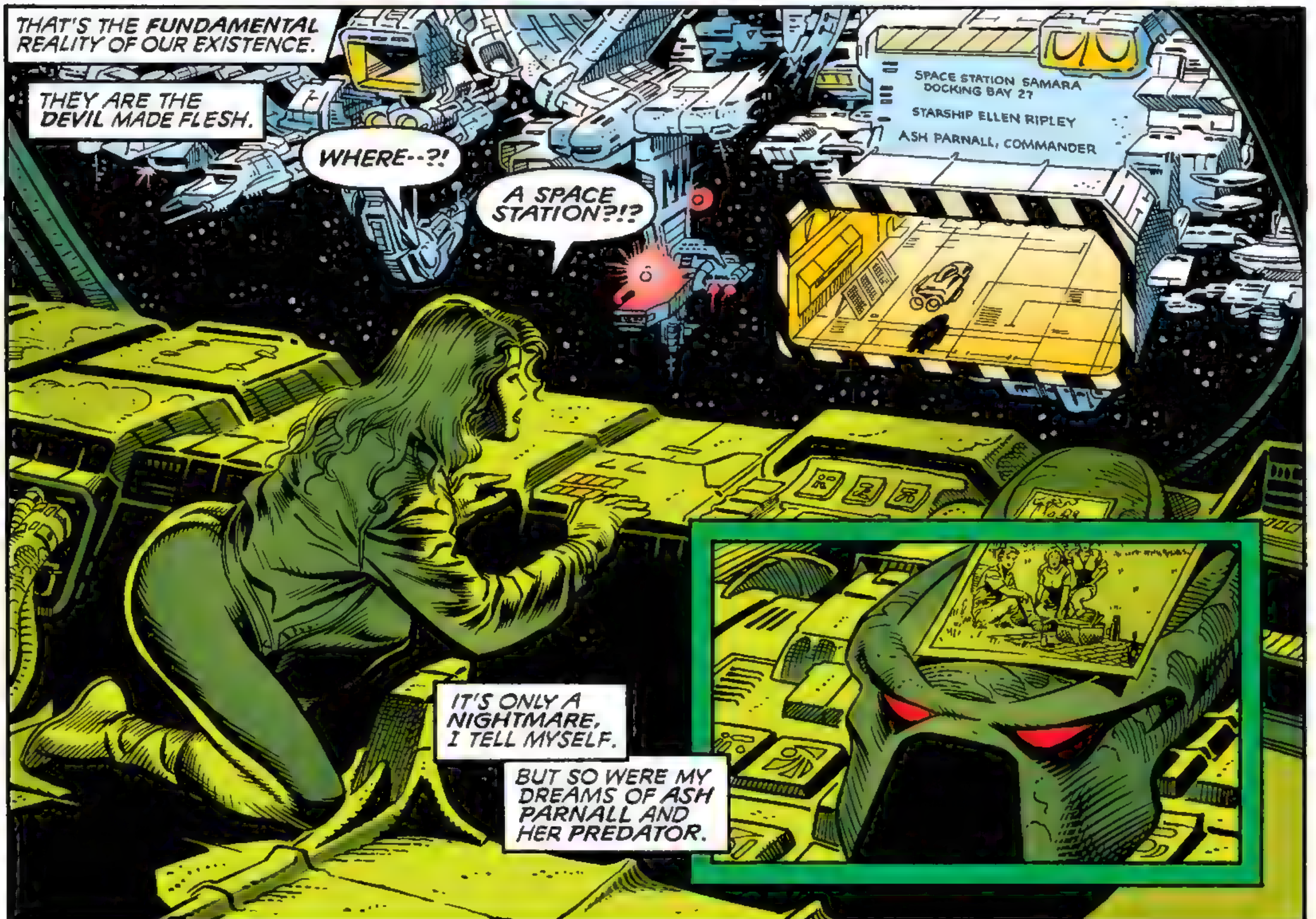
THE ALIENS
ARE HUMANITY'S
ENEMY.

THAT'S THE FUNDAMENTAL
REALITY OF OUR EXISTENCE.

THEY ARE THE
DEVIL MADE FLESH.

WHERE--?!

A SPACE
STATION?!?



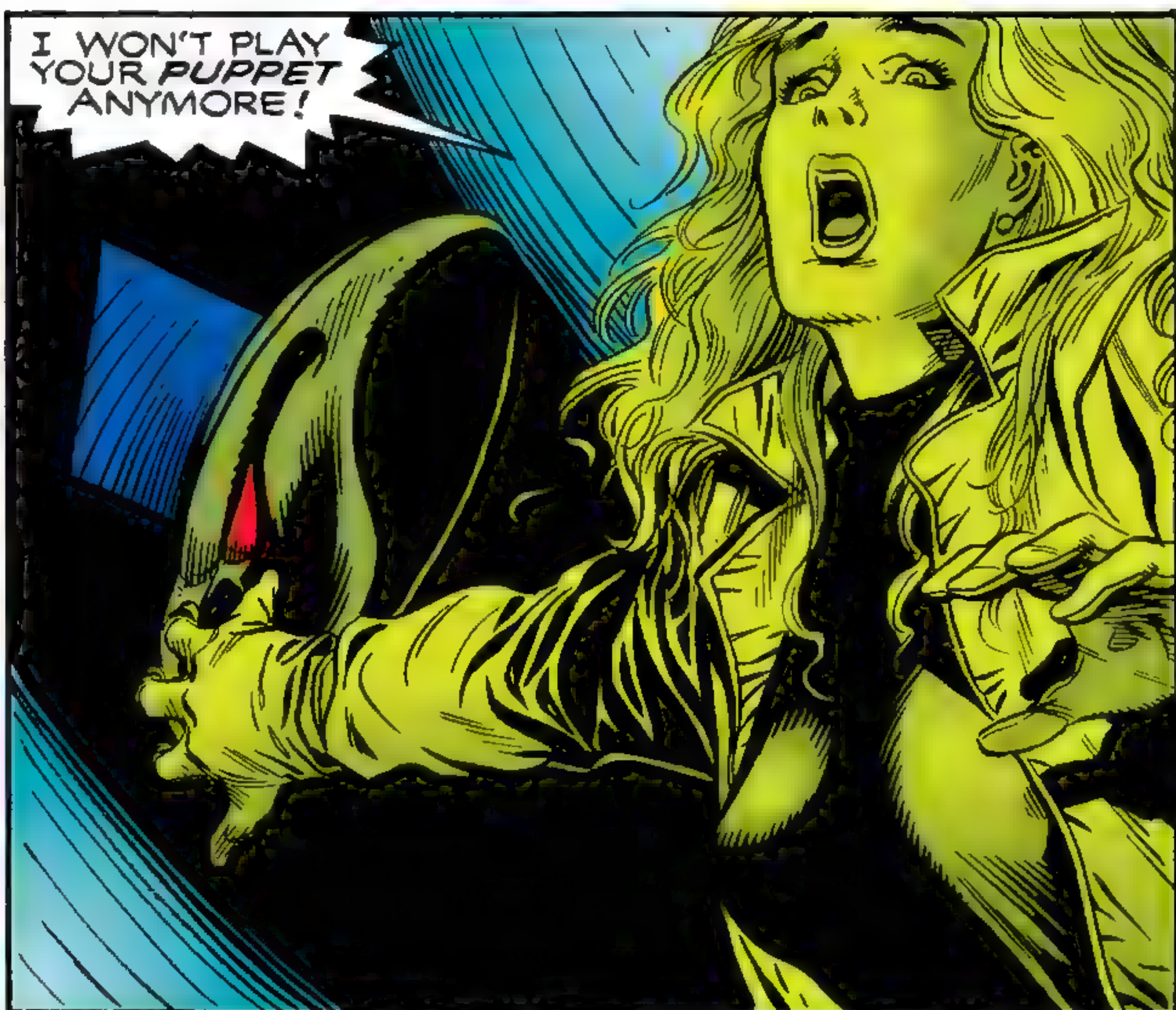
IT'S ONLY A
NIGHTMARE,
I TELL MYSELF.

BUT SO WERE MY
DREAMS OF ASH
PARNALL AND
HER PREDATOR.



IT'S MORE THAN I CAN BEAR.

DAMN YOU BOTH! DAMN YOU!



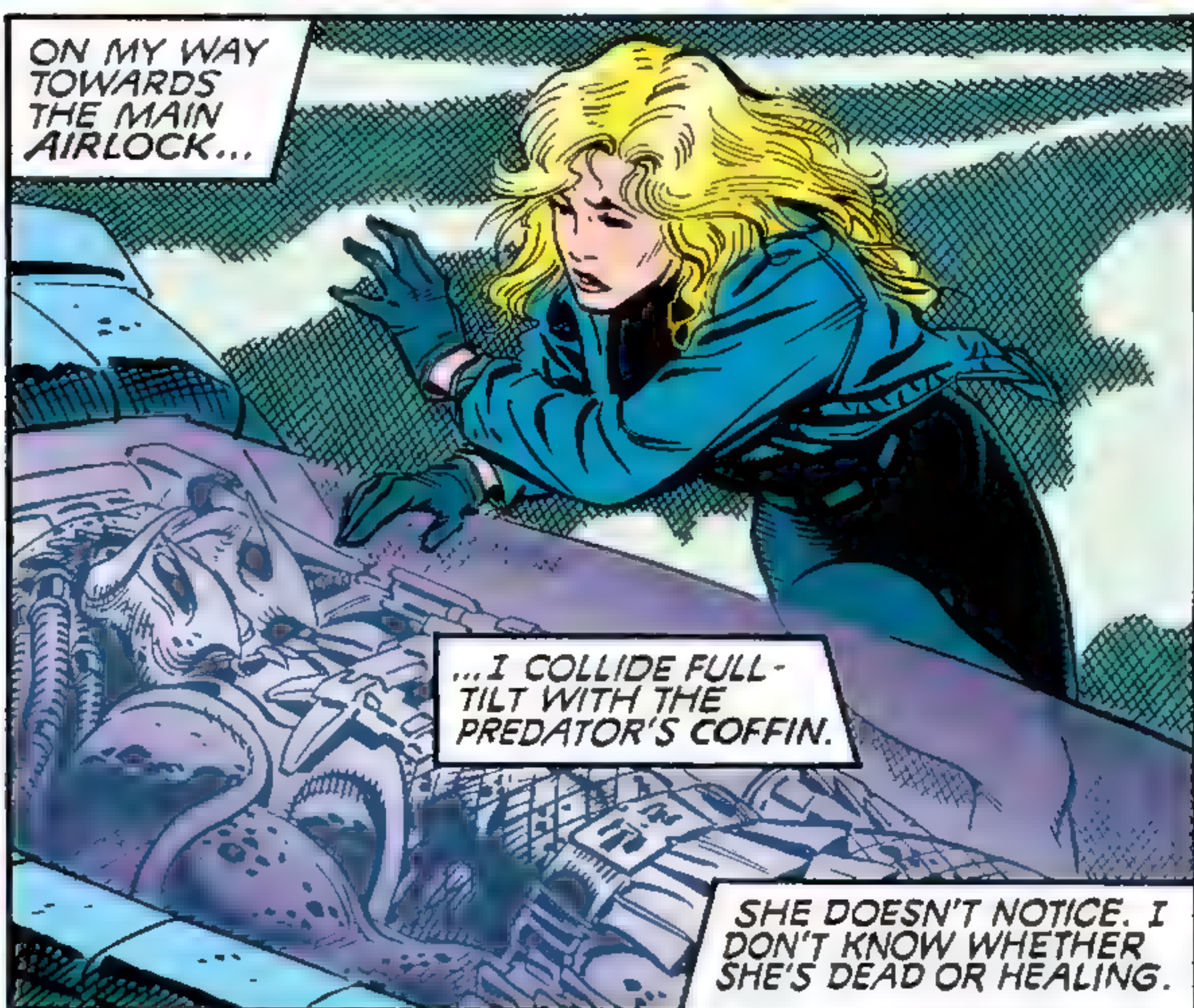
I WON'T PLAY YOUR PUPPET ANYMORE!



ALL I WANT-- IS OUT.

I DON'T CONSIDER HOW I'LL GET THERE.

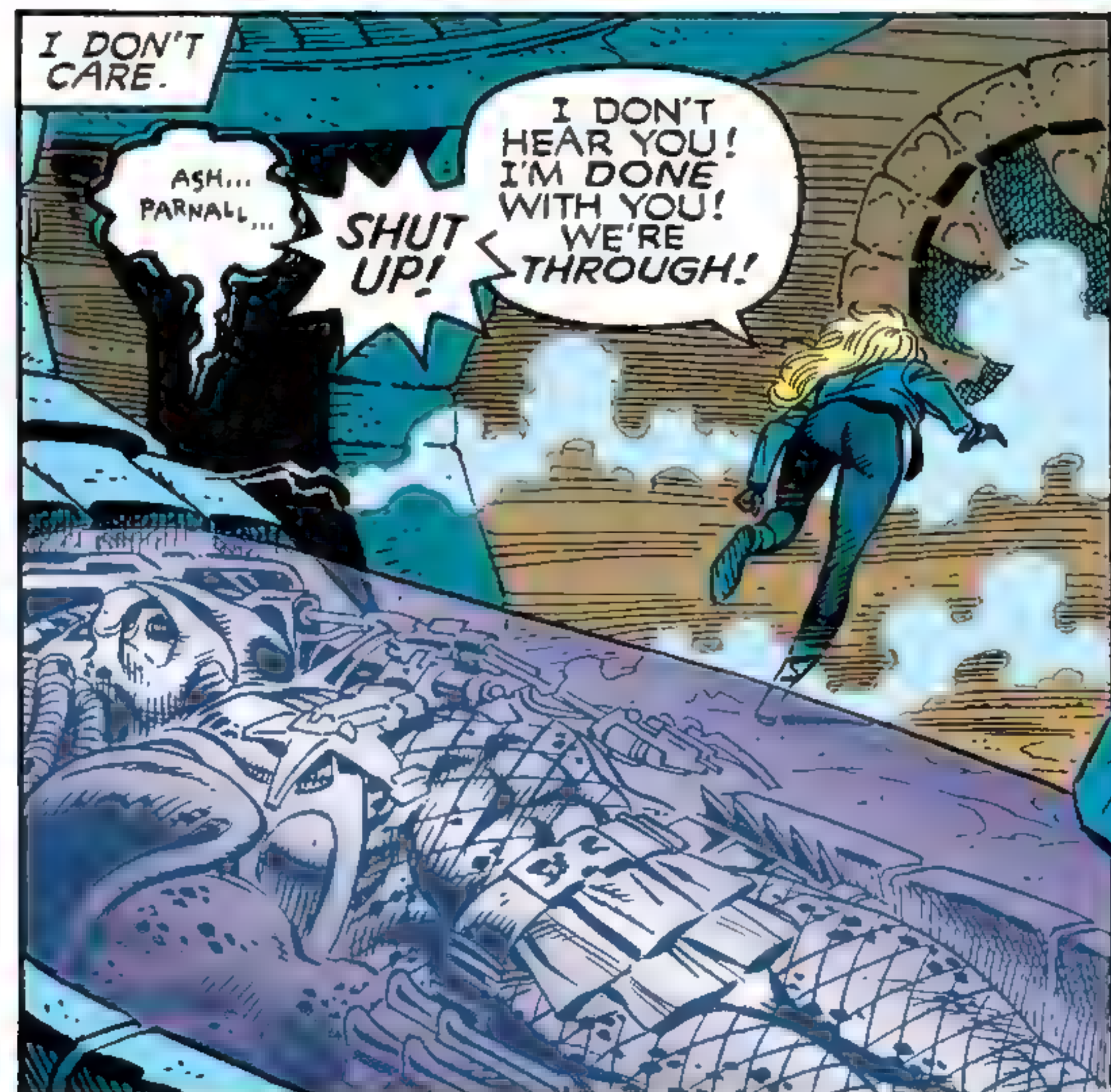
THE MOMENT I CYCLE THE FLIGHT-DECK HATCH, MY ATMOSPHERE'S OVERWHELMED BY THE PREDATOR'S.



ON MY WAY TOWARDS THE MAIN AIRLOCK...

...I COLLIDE FULL-TILT WITH THE PREDATOR'S COFFIN.

SHE DOESN'T NOTICE. I DON'T KNOW WHETHER SHE'S DEAD OR HEALING.

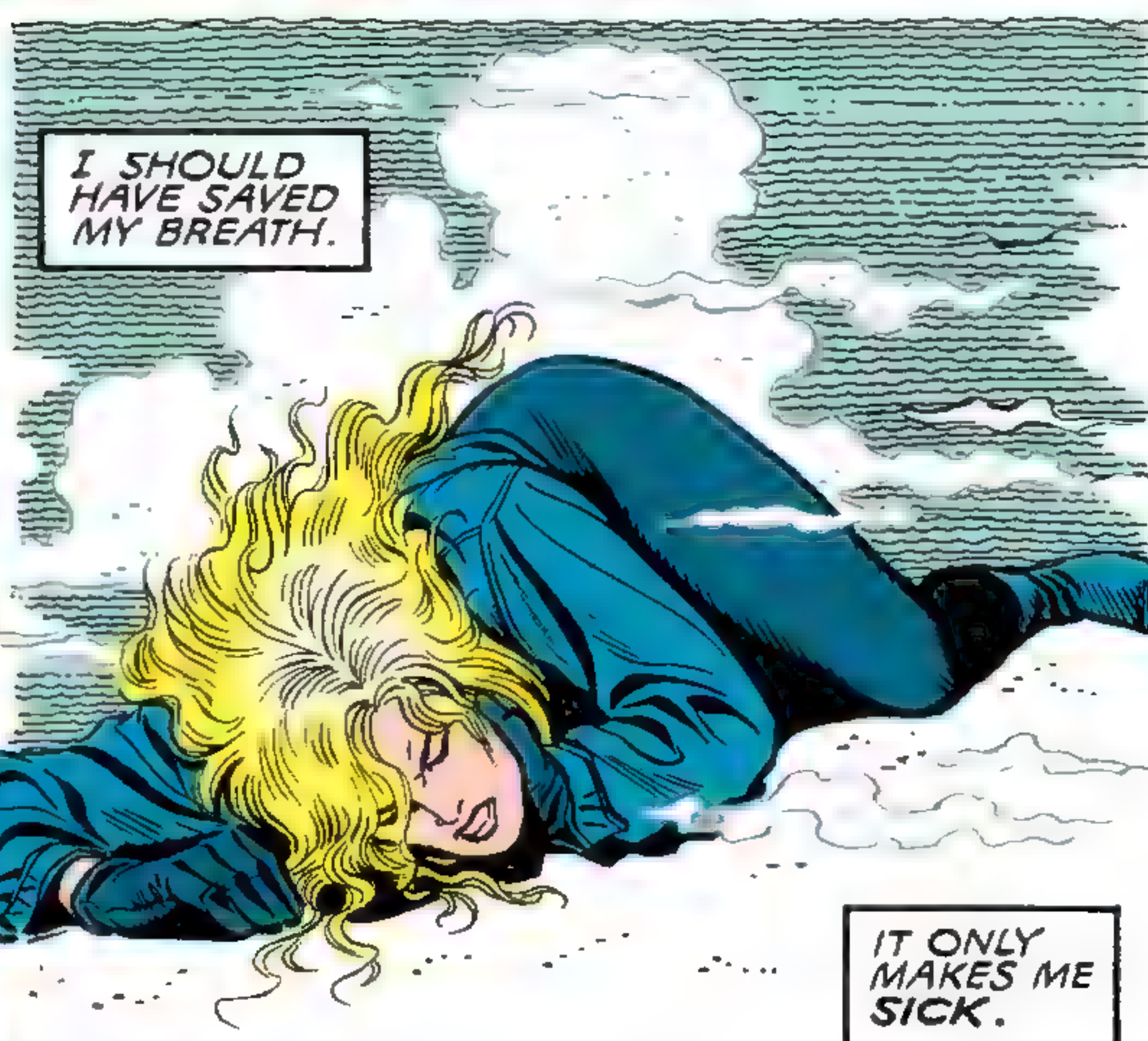


I DON'T CARE.

ASH... PARNALL...

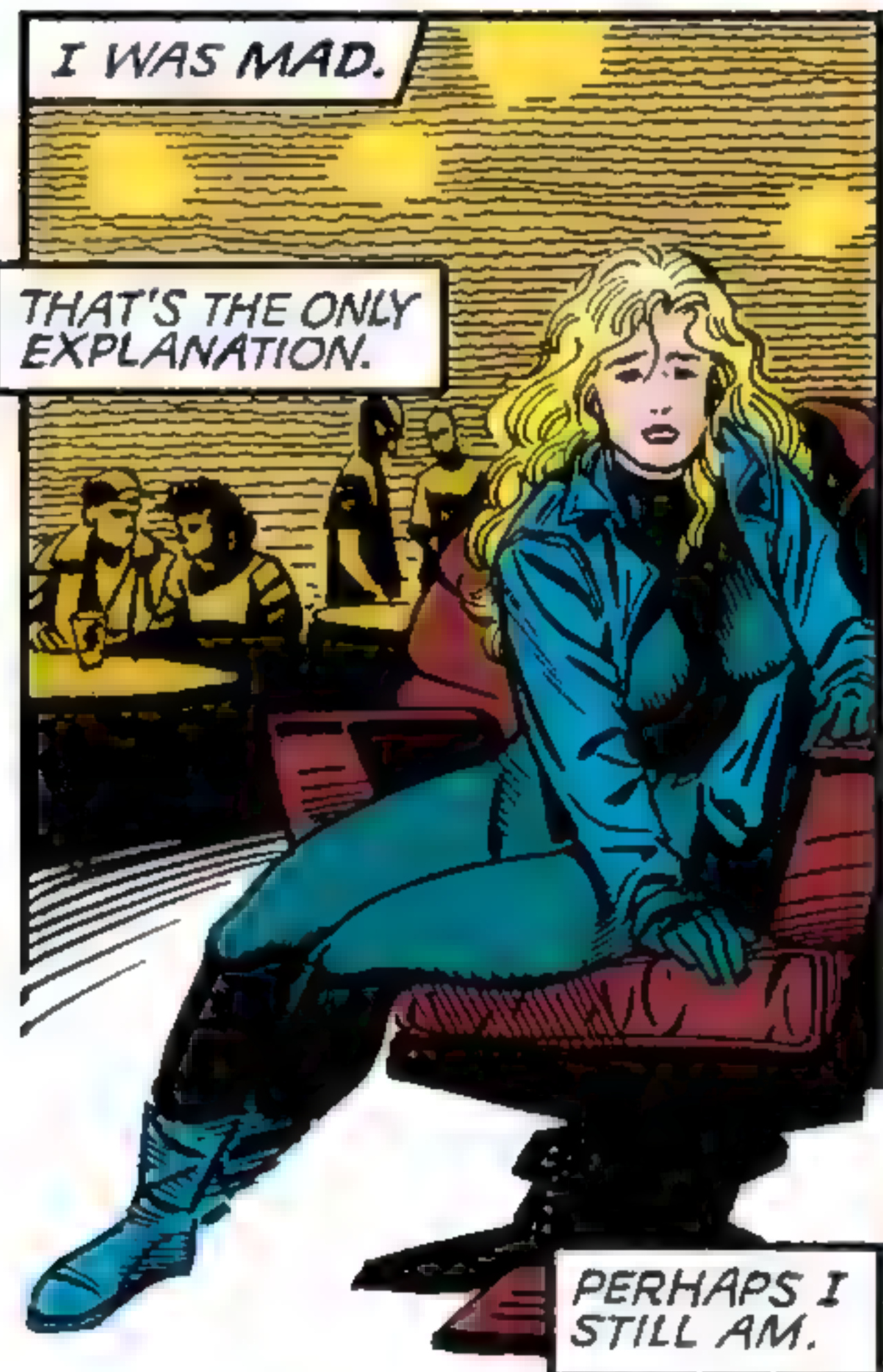
SHUT UP!

I DON'T HEAR YOU! I'M DONE WITH YOU! WE'RE THROUGH!



I SHOULD HAVE SAVED MY BREATH.

IT ONLY MAKES ME SICK.



I WAS MAD.

THAT'S THE ONLY EXPLANATION.

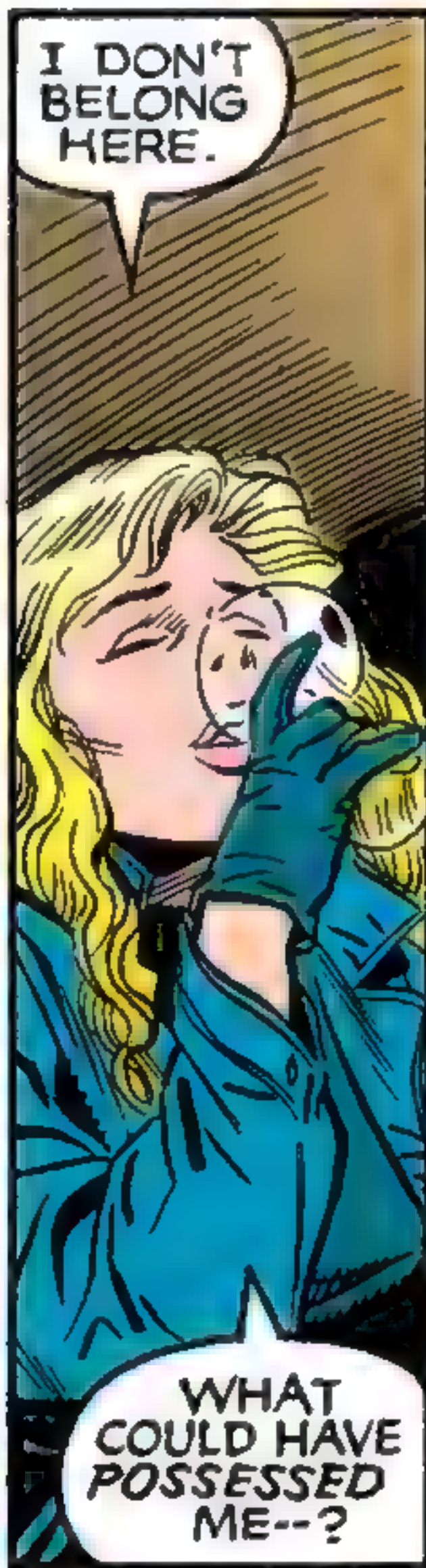
PERHAPS I STILL AM.



MERCIFUL GOD, HOW I WISH THIS WAS SOME VIRTUAL SCENARIO, ONE OF TOY'S ADVENTURES.

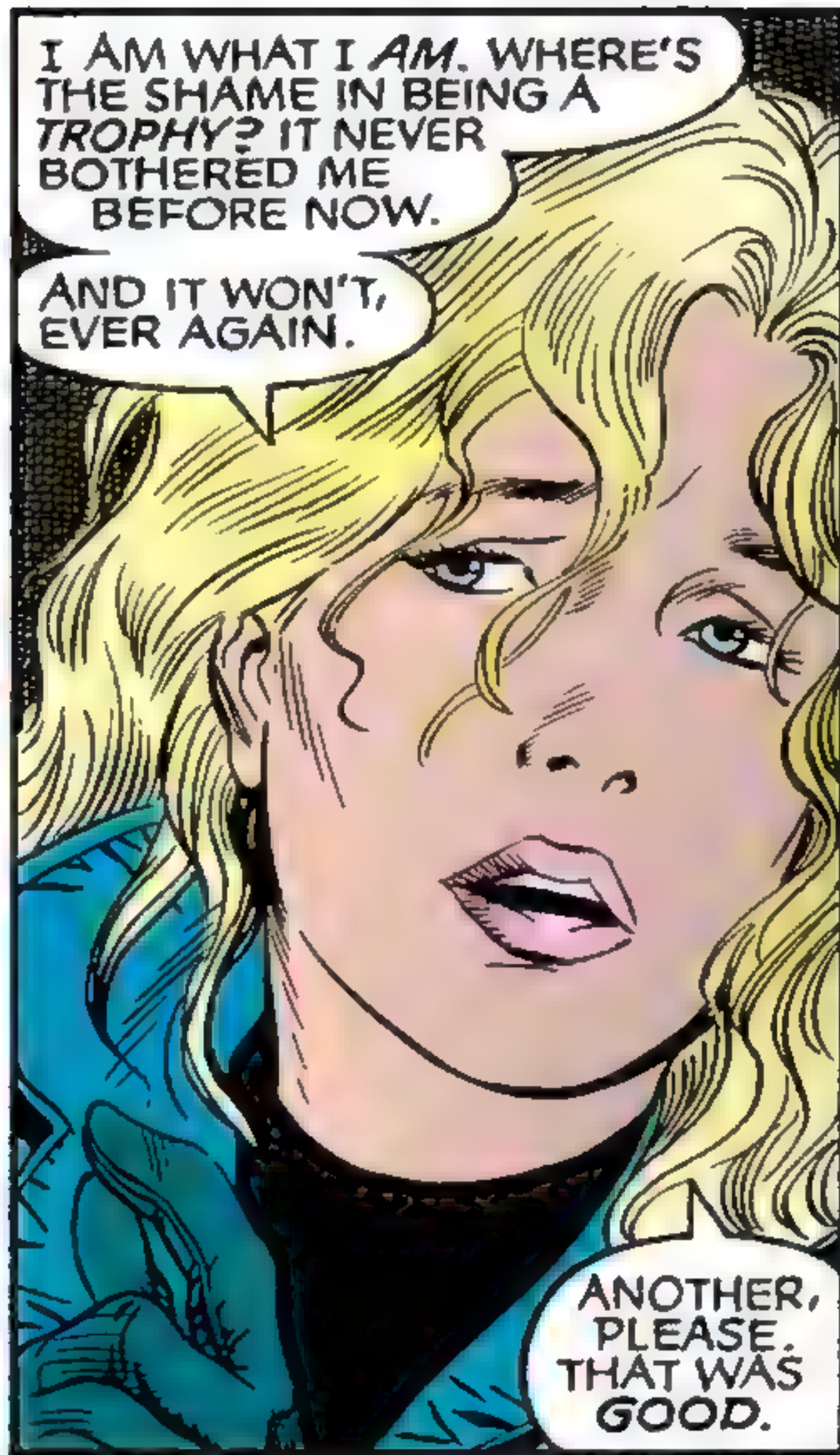
I'M SO TIRED.

YOUR DRINK, MA'AM.



I DON'T BELONG HERE.

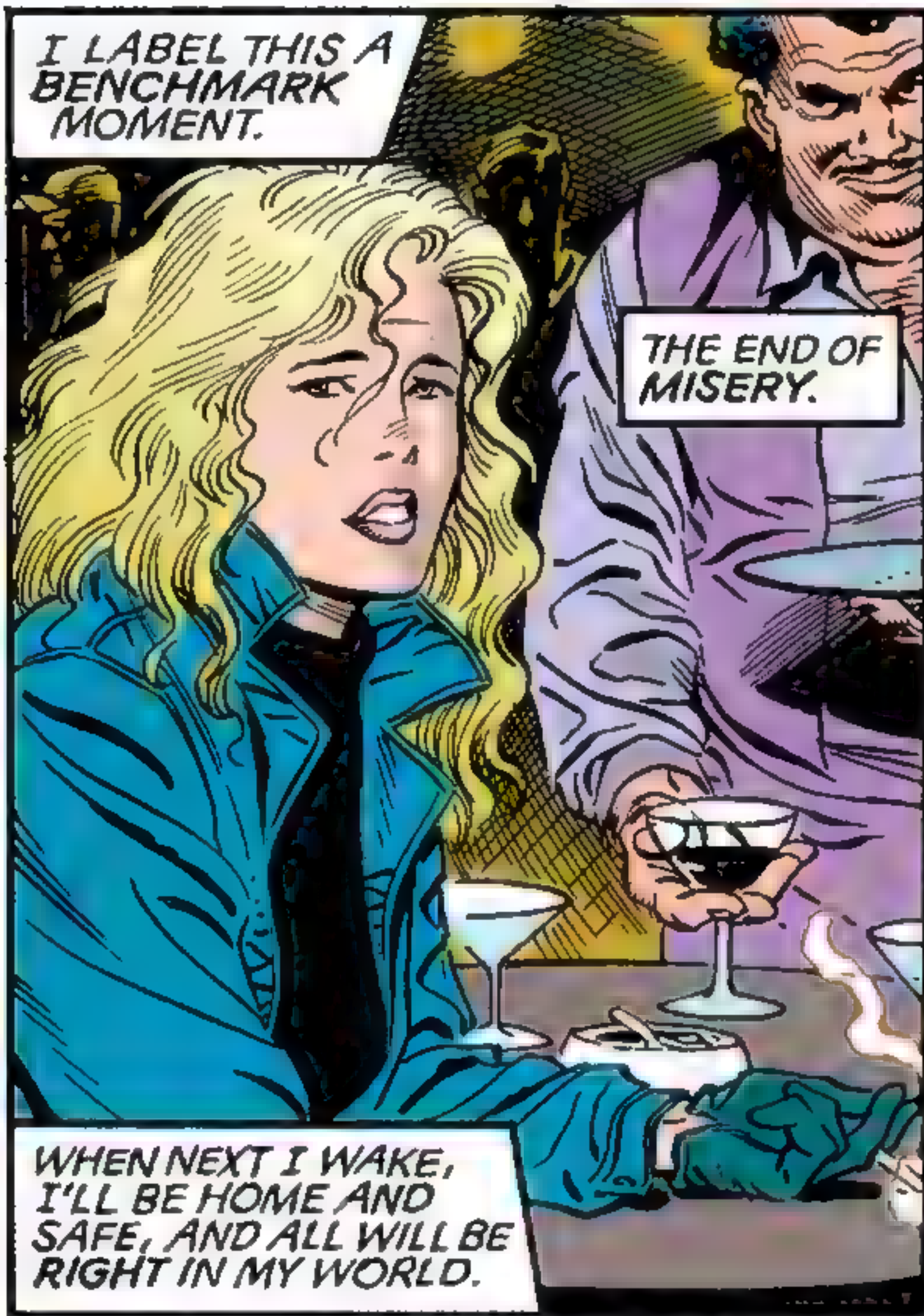
WHAT COULD HAVE POSSESSED ME--?



I AM WHAT I AM. WHERE'S THE SHAME IN BEING A TROPHY? IT NEVER BOTHERED ME BEFORE NOW.

AND IT WON'T, EVER AGAIN.

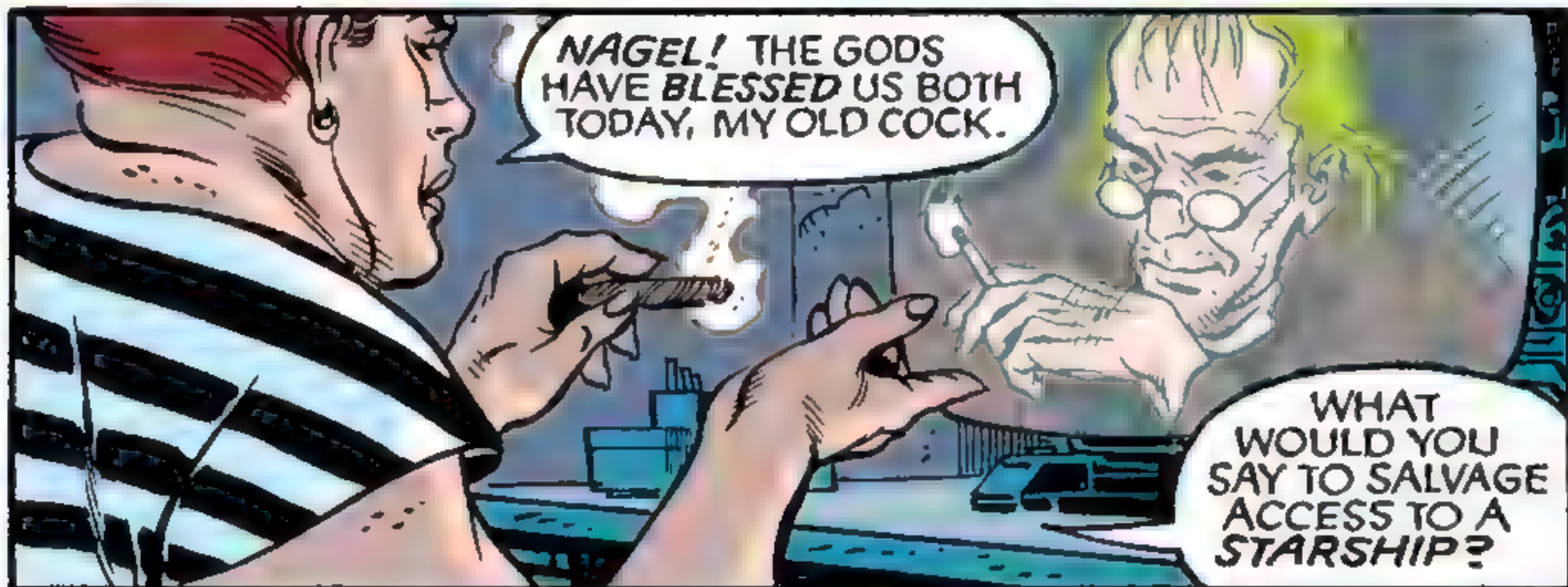
ANOTHER, PLEASE. THAT WAS GOOD.



I LABEL THIS A BENCHMARK MOMENT.

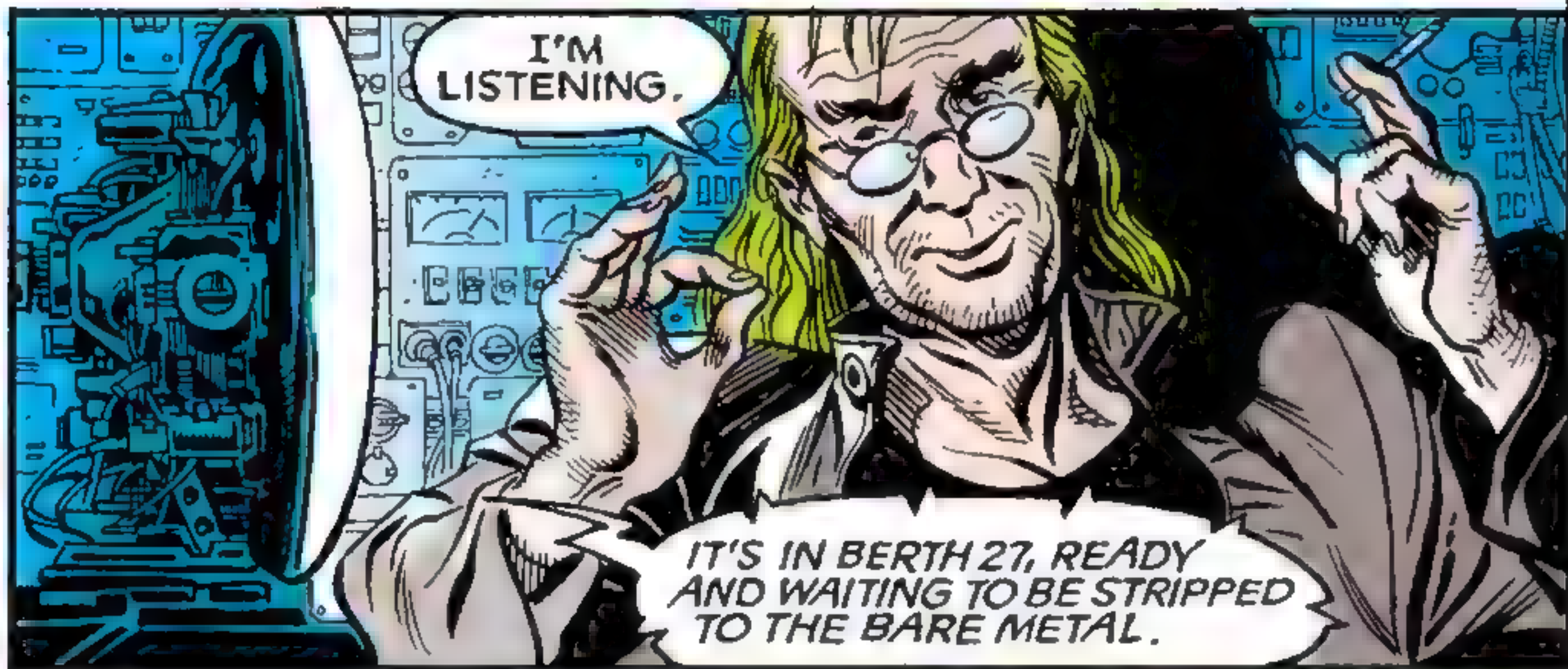
THE END OF MISERY.

WHEN NEXT I WAKE, I'LL BE HOME AND SAFE, AND ALL WILL BE RIGHT IN MY WORLD.



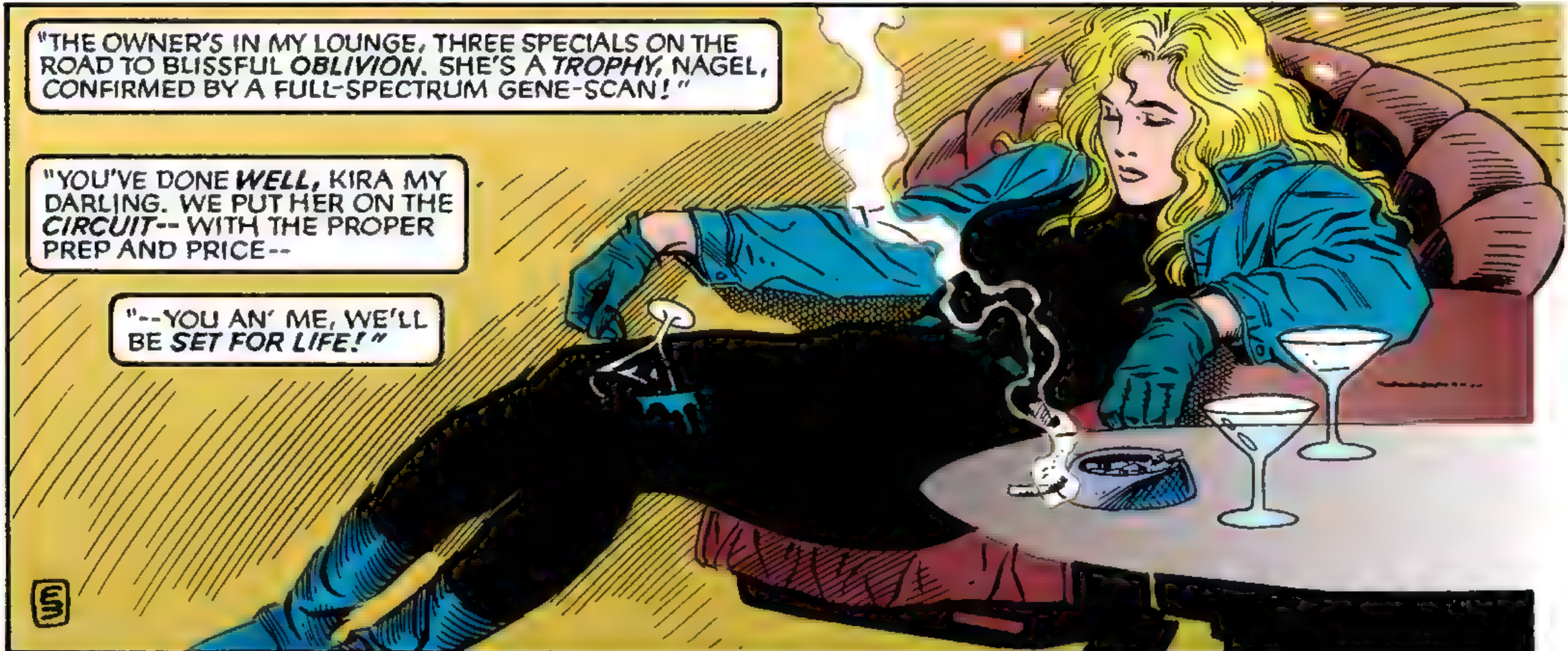
NAGEL! THE GODS HAVE BLESSED US BOTH TODAY, MY OLD COCK.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO SALVAGE ACCESS TO A STARSHIP?



I'M LISTENING.

IT'S IN BERTH 27, READY AND WAITING TO BE STRIPPED TO THE BARE METAL.



"THE OWNER'S IN MY LOUNGE, THREE SPECIALS ON THE ROAD TO BLISSFUL OBLIVION. SHE'S A TROPHY, NAGEL, CONFIRMED BY A FULL-SPECTRUM GENE-SCAN!"

"YOU'VE DONE WELL, KIRA MY DARLING. WE PUT HER ON THE CIRCUIT-- WITH THE PROPER PREP AND PRICE--

"--YOU AN' ME, WE'LL BE SET FOR LIFE!"

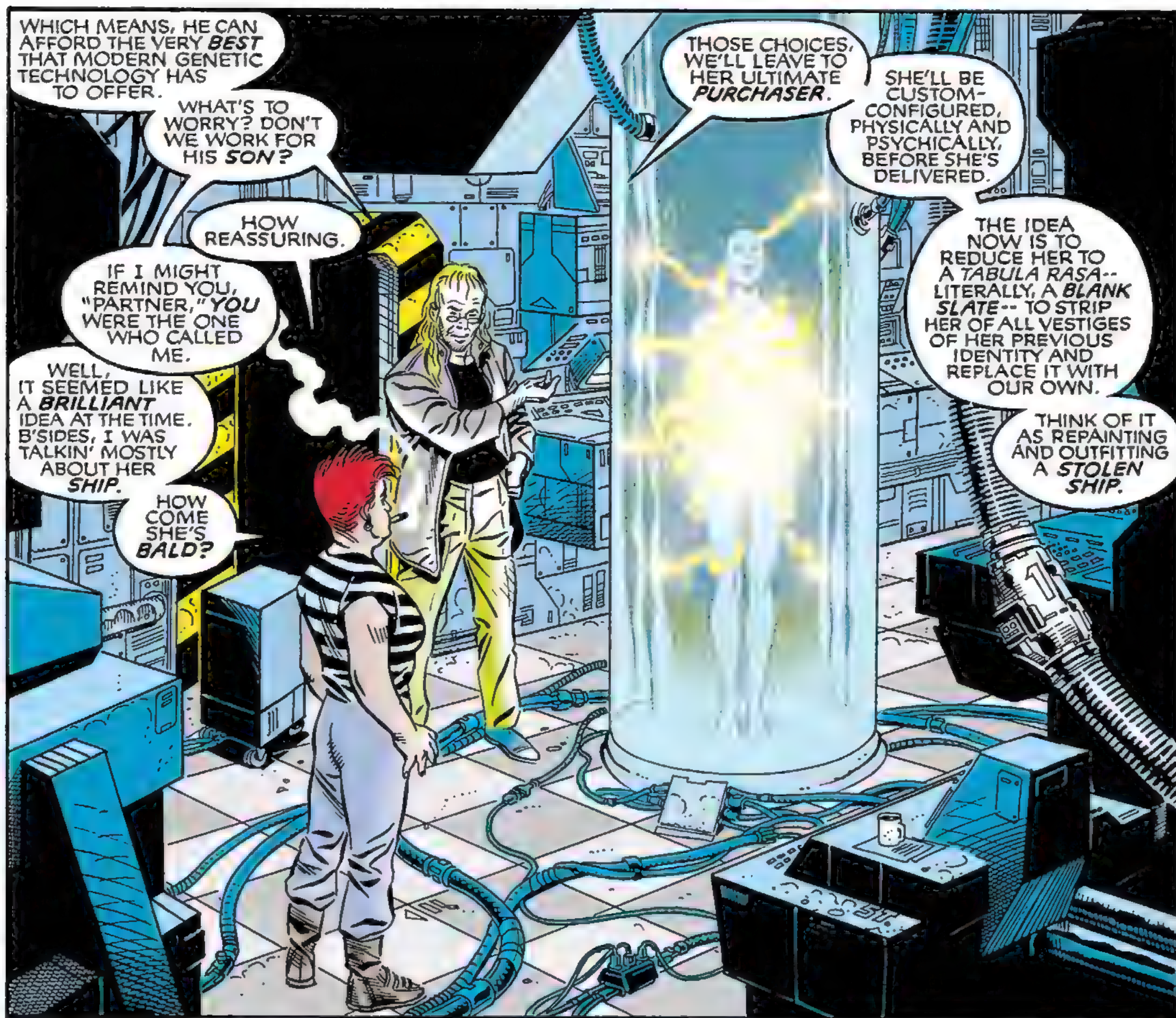
YOU
GOTTA BE
KIDDIN' ME,
NAGEL--

--**THIS**
IS WHAT
ALL THE
FUSS IS
ABOUT?!

DON'T
SCOFF, KIRA.
CARYN
DELACROIX
IS A PRIME
TROPHY...

...WHOSE
HUBBY
JUST HAPPENS
TA BE ONE'A
THE MOST
POWERFUL
CORPORATE
EXECUTIVES
IN KNOWN
SPACE.

RUDE
AWAKENINGS



WHICH MEANS, HE CAN AFFORD THE VERY **BEST** THAT MODERN GENETIC TECHNOLOGY HAS TO OFFER.

WHAT'S TO WORRY? DON'T WE WORK FOR HIS SON?

HOW REASSURING.

IF I MIGHT REMIND YOU, "PARTNER," YOU WERE THE ONE WHO CALLED ME.

WELL, IT SEEMED LIKE A **BRILLIANT** IDEA AT THE TIME. B'SIDES, I WAS TALKIN' MOSTLY ABOUT HER **SHIP**.

HOW COME SHE'S **BALD**?

THOSE CHOICES, WE'LL LEAVE TO HER ULTIMATE **PURCHASER**.

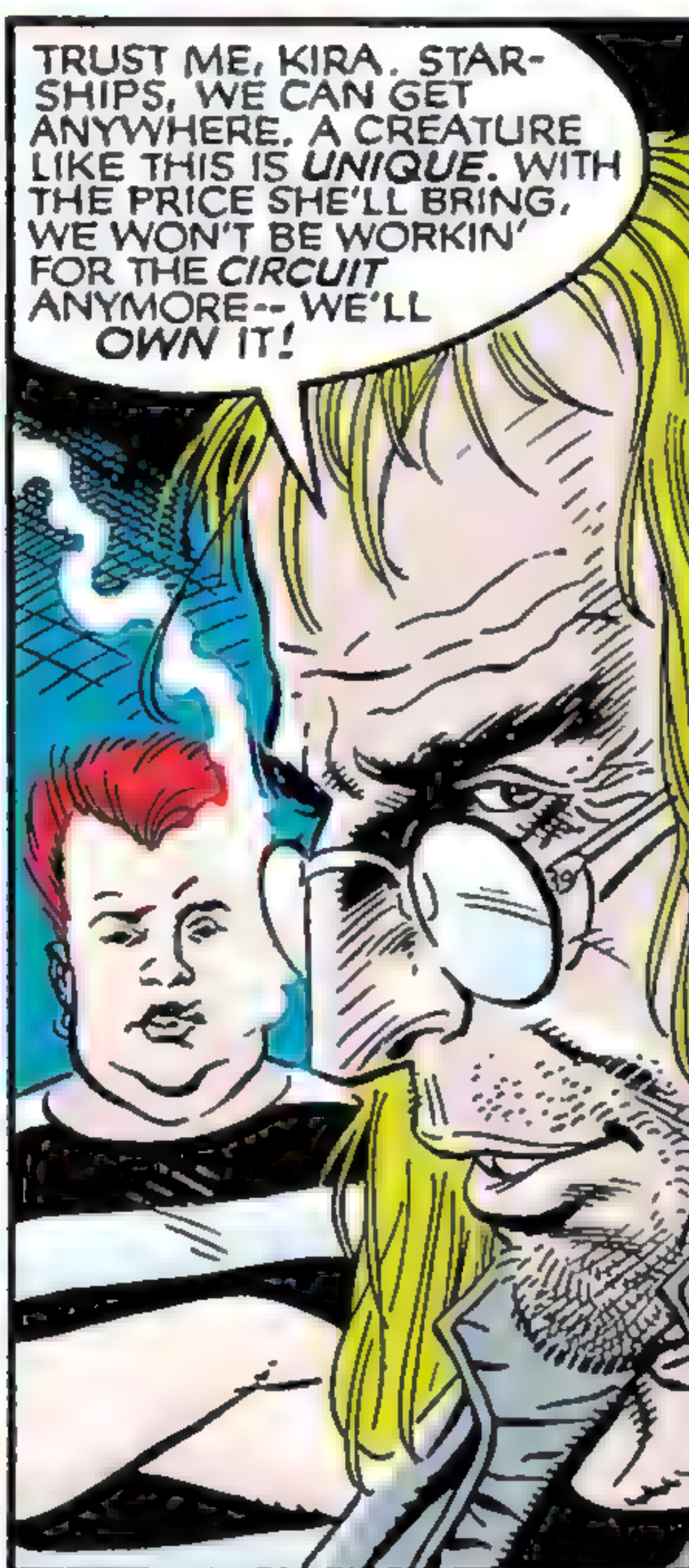
SHE'LL BE CUSTOM-CONFIGURED, PHYSICALLY AND PSYCHICALLY, BEFORE SHE'S DELIVERED.

THE IDEA NOW IS TO REDUCE HER TO A **TABULA RASA**-- LITERALLY, A **BLANK SLATE**-- TO STRIP HER OF ALL VESTIGES OF HER PREVIOUS IDENTITY AND REPLACE IT WITH OUR OWN.

THINK OF IT AS REPAINTING AND OUTFITTING A **STOLEN SHIP**.



LEAST'WAYS I KNOW WHAT I'M **SELLIN'** WITH A **SHIP**.

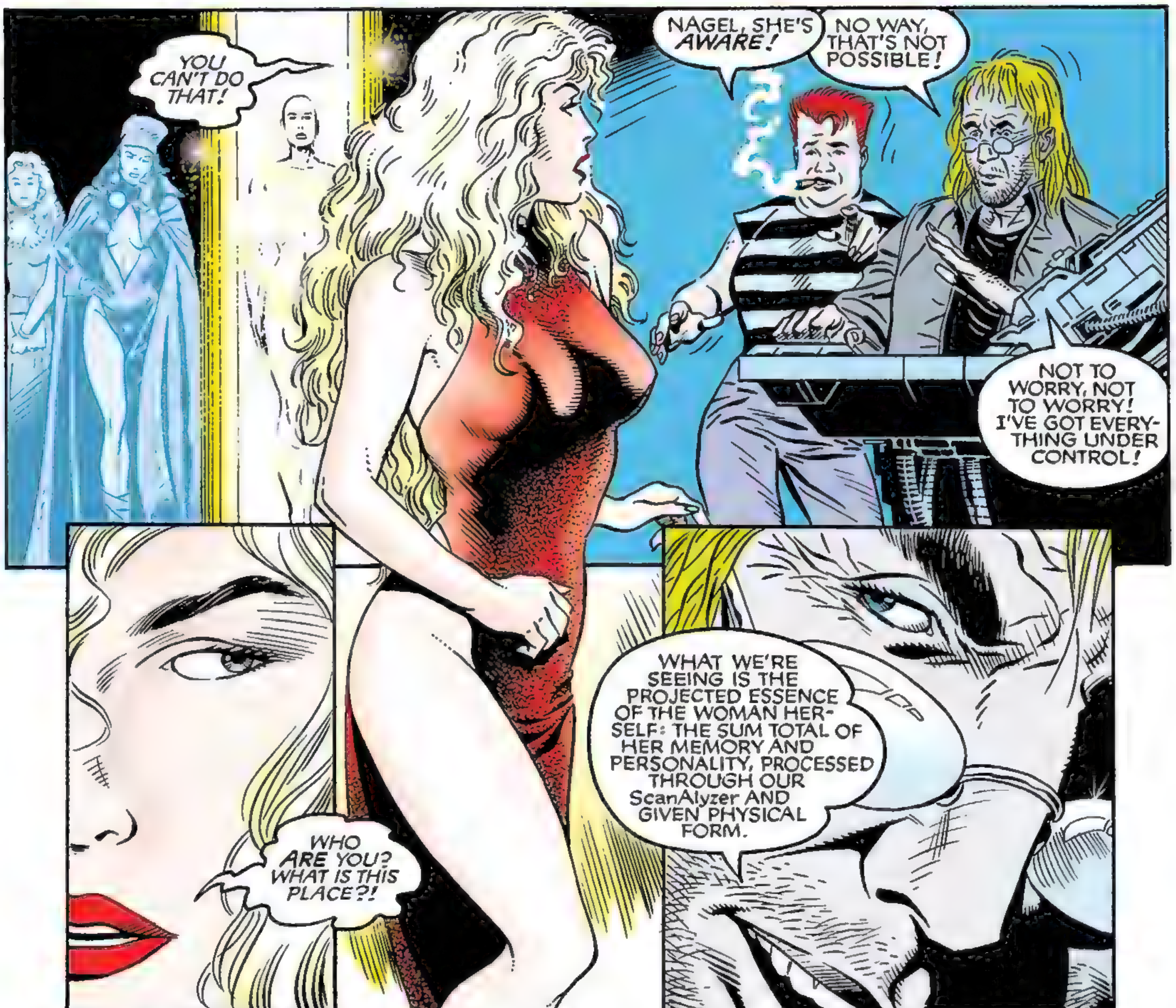


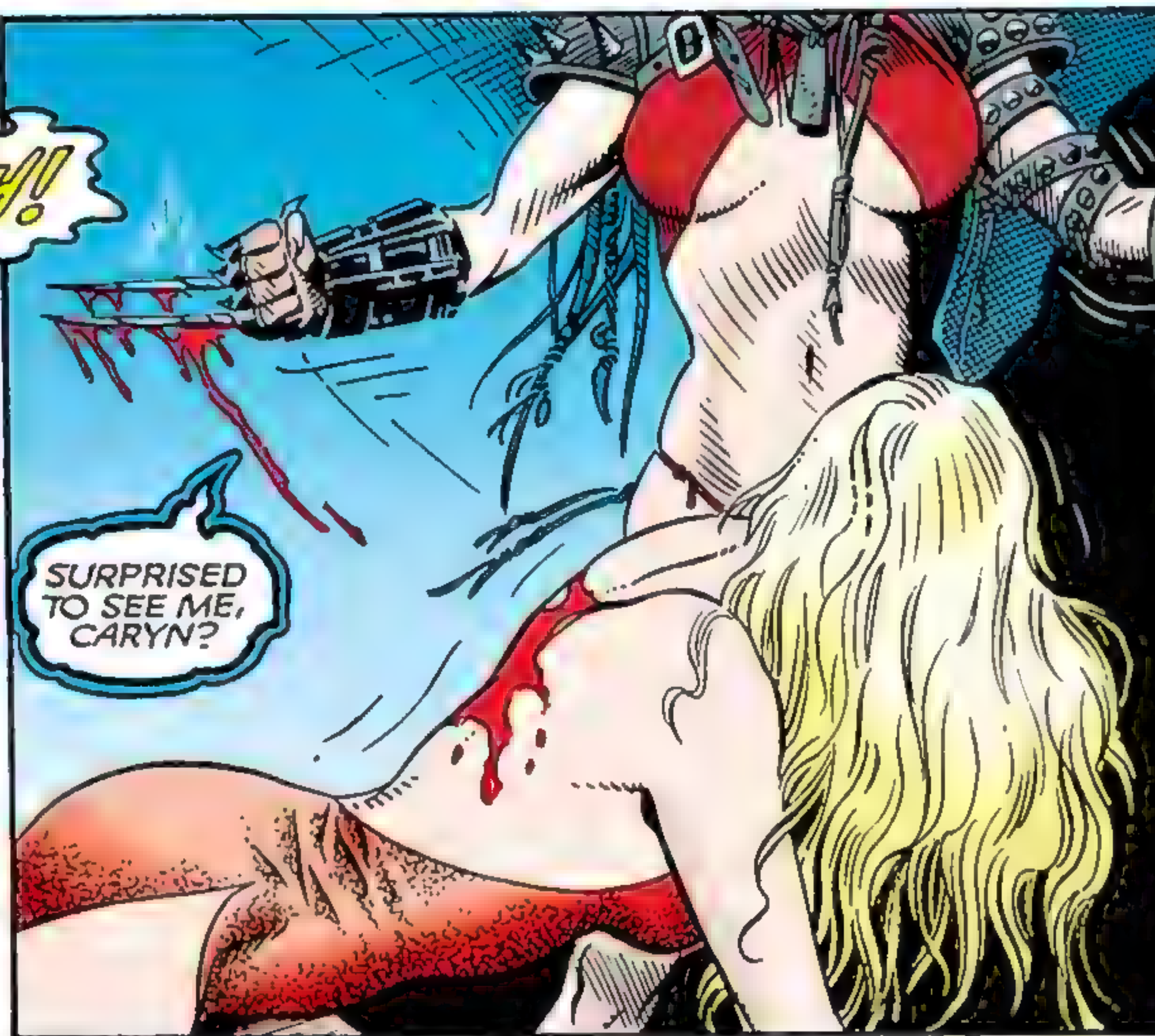
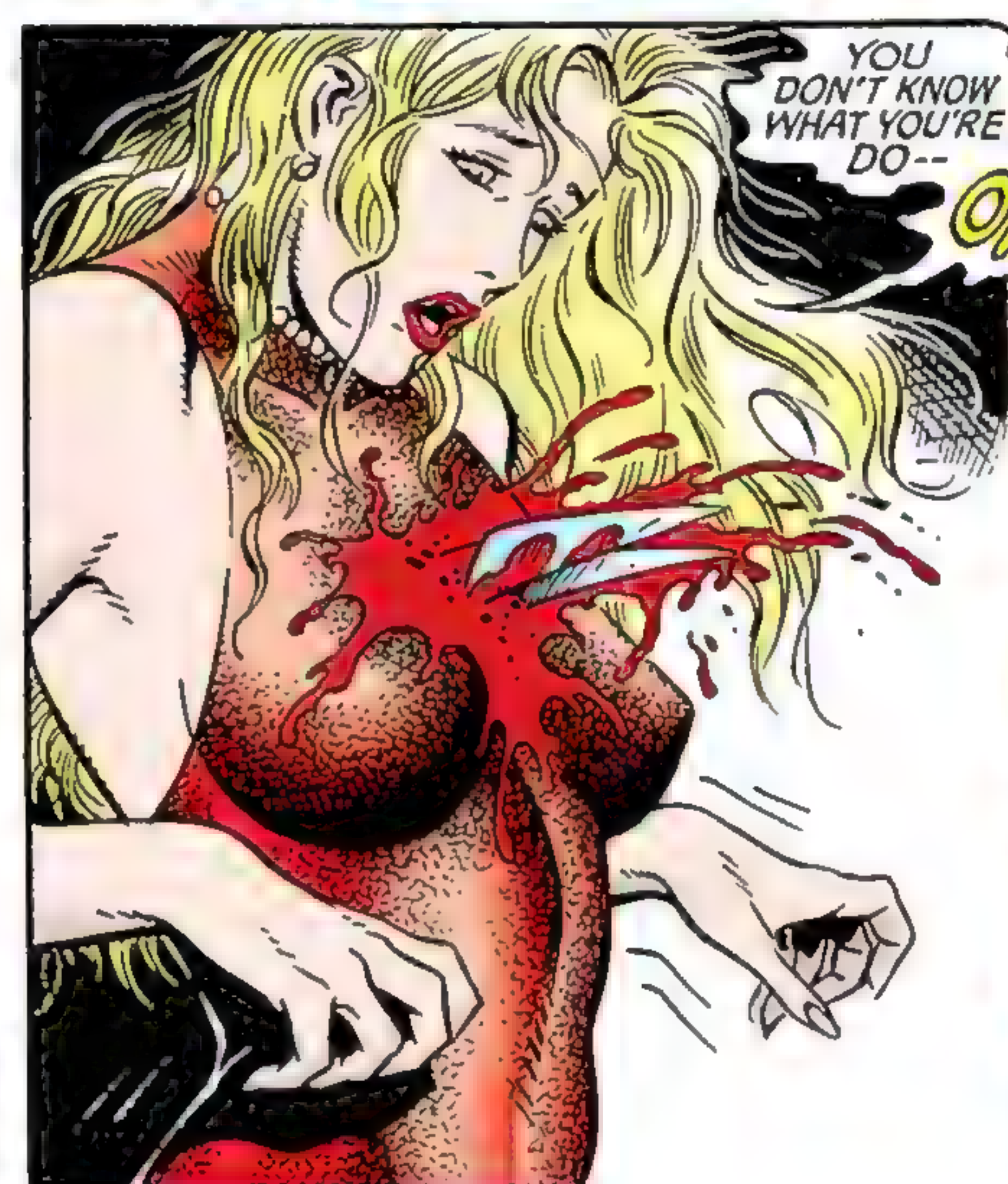
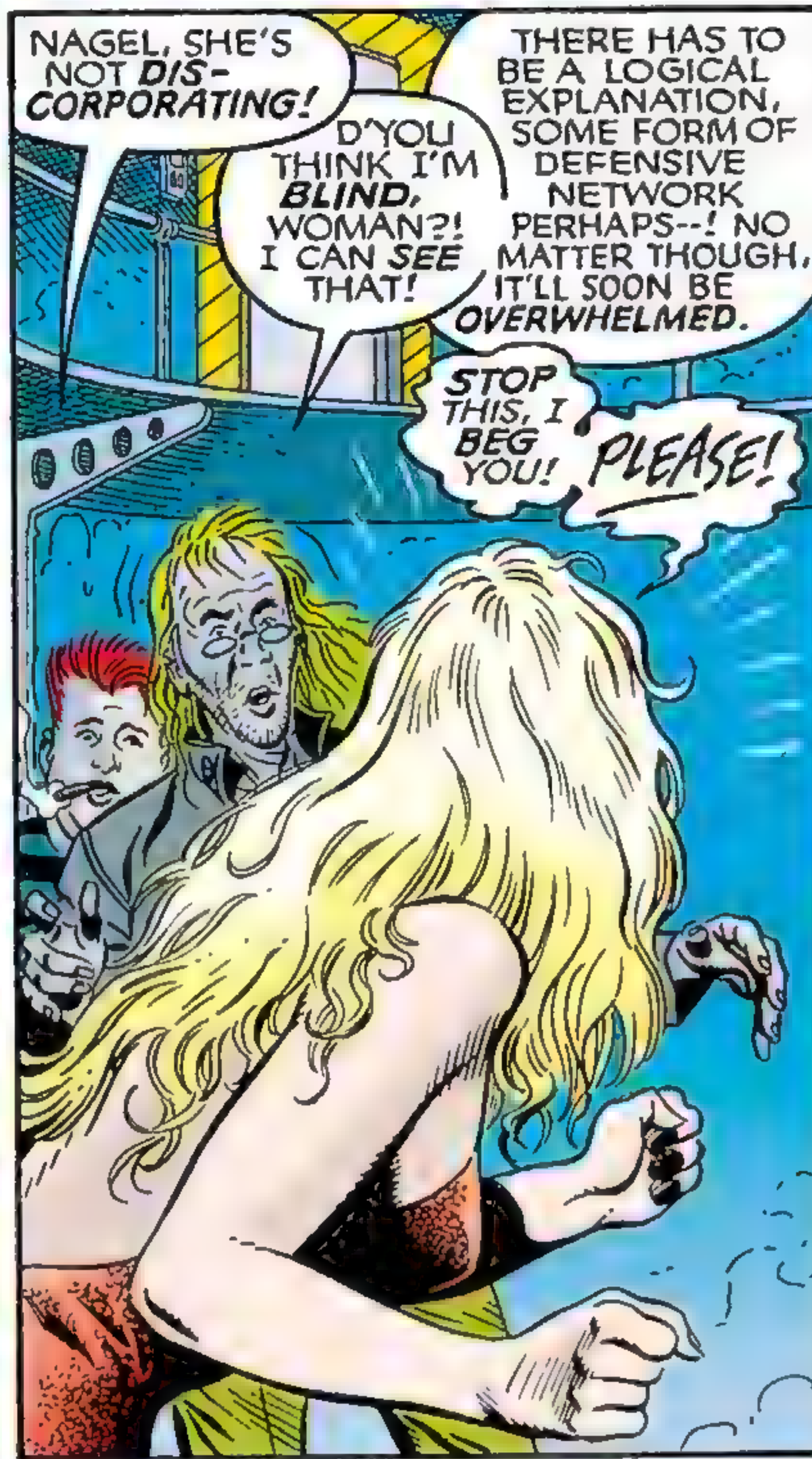
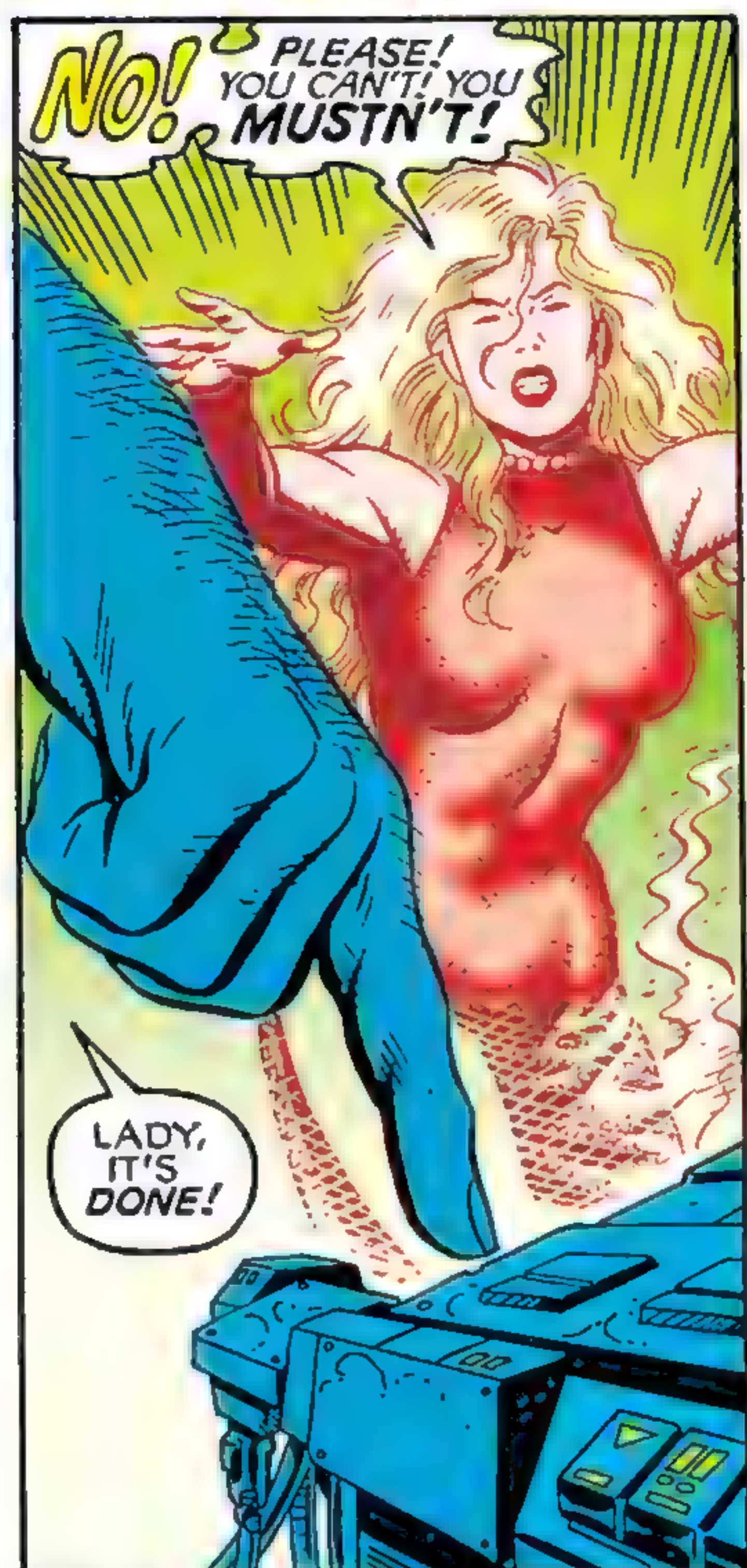
TRUST ME, KIRA. STAR-SHIPS, WE CAN GET ANYWHERE. A CREATURE LIKE THIS IS **UNIQUE**. WITH THE PRICE SHE'LL BRING, WE WON'T BE WORKIN' FOR THE **CIRCUIT** ANYMORE-- WE'LL **OWN IT!**

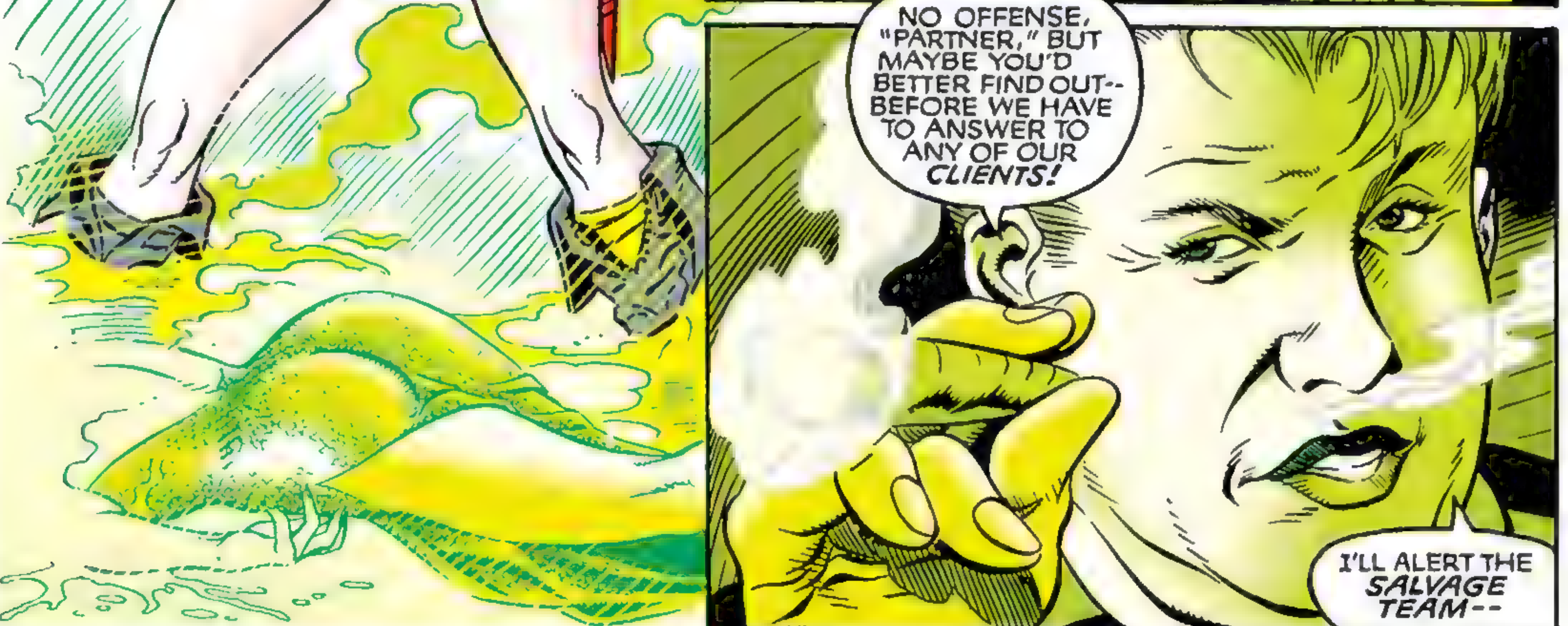
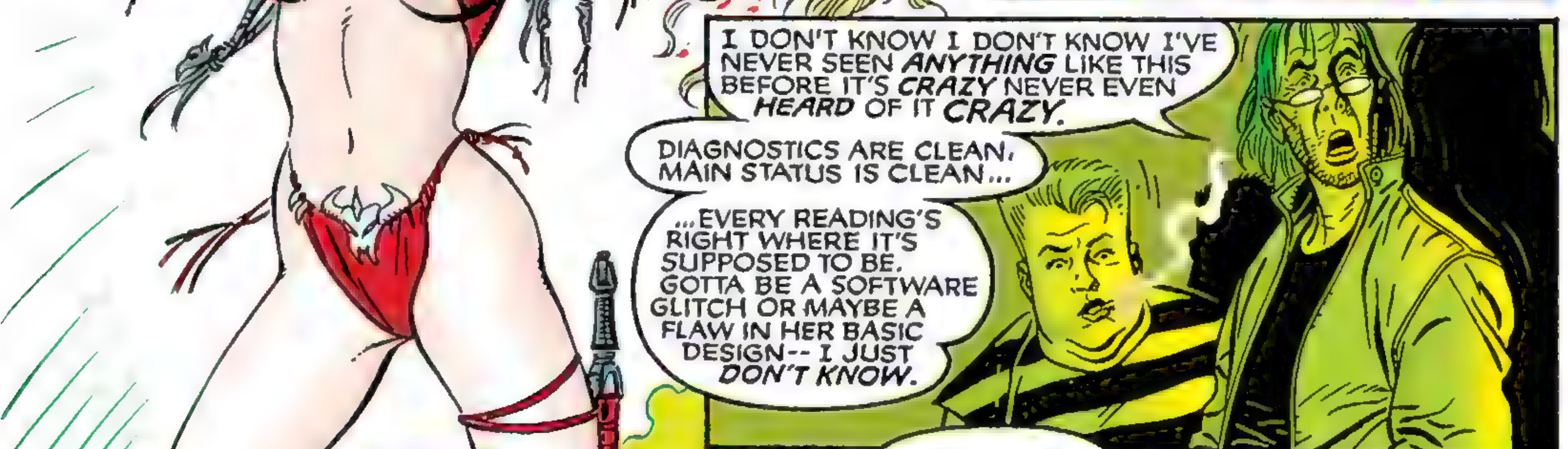
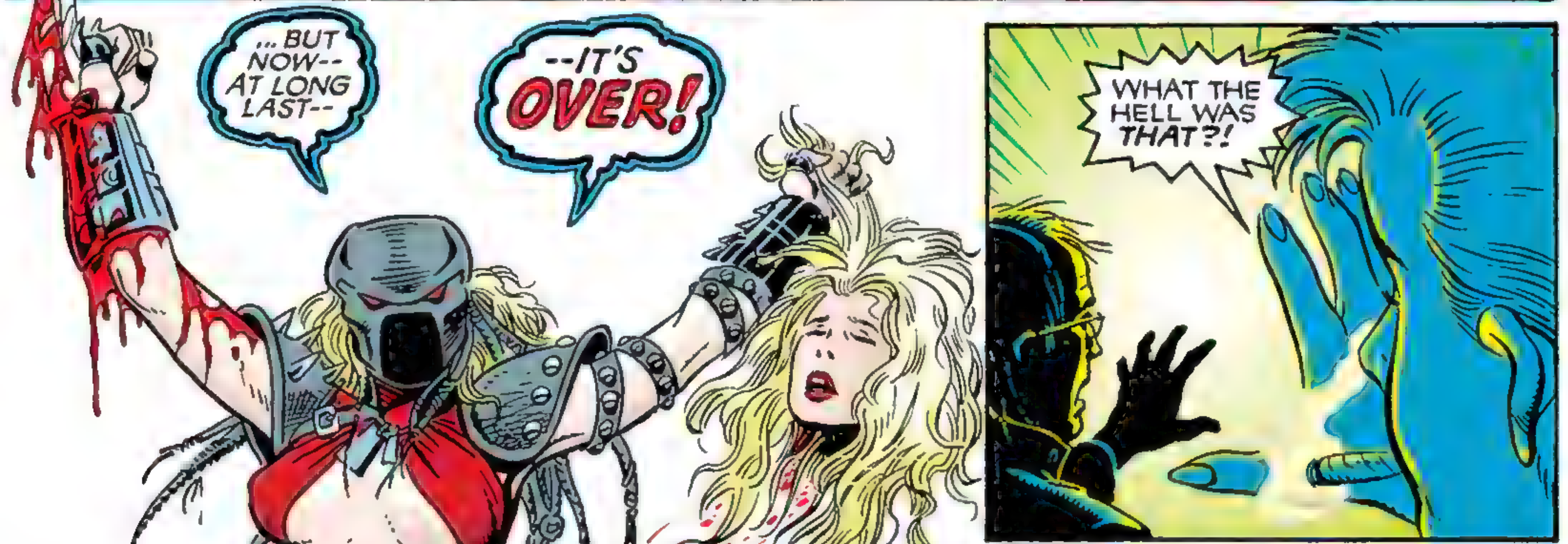
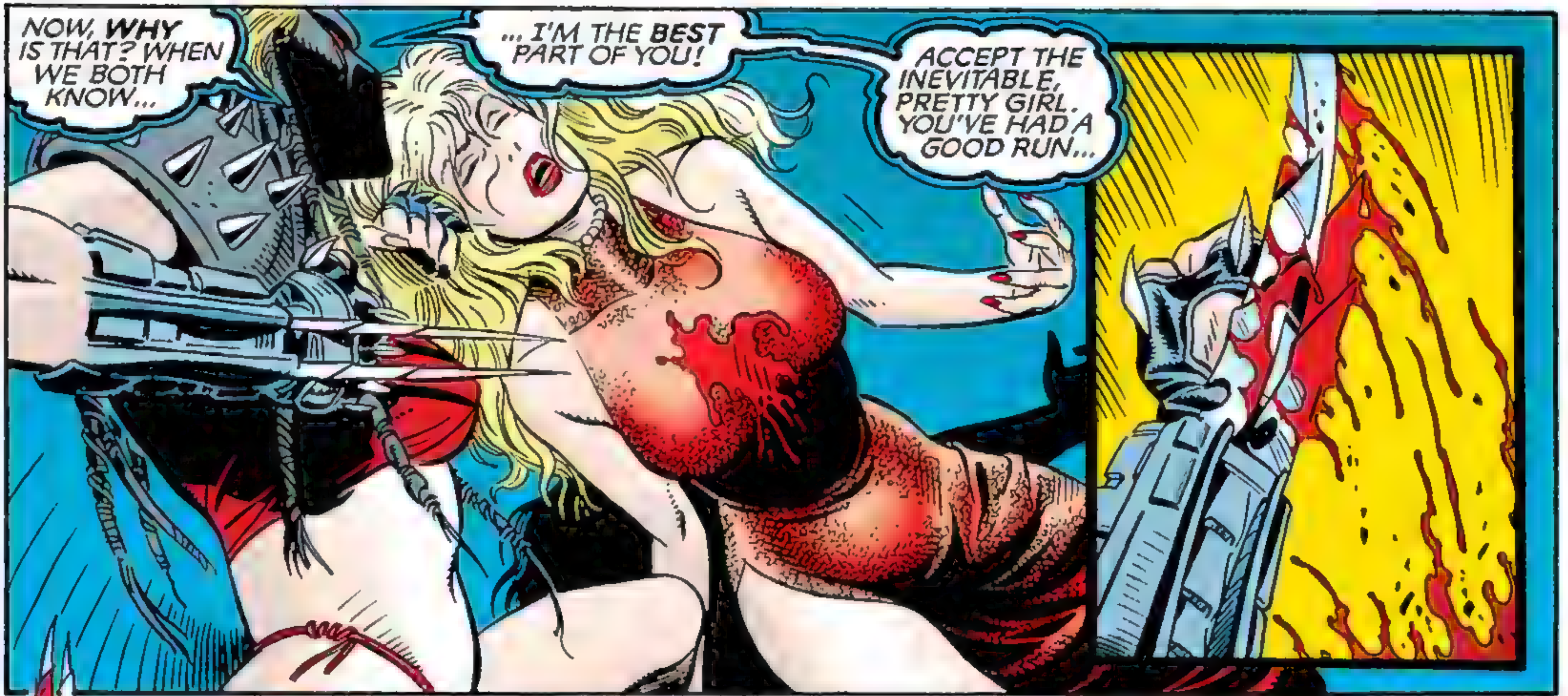


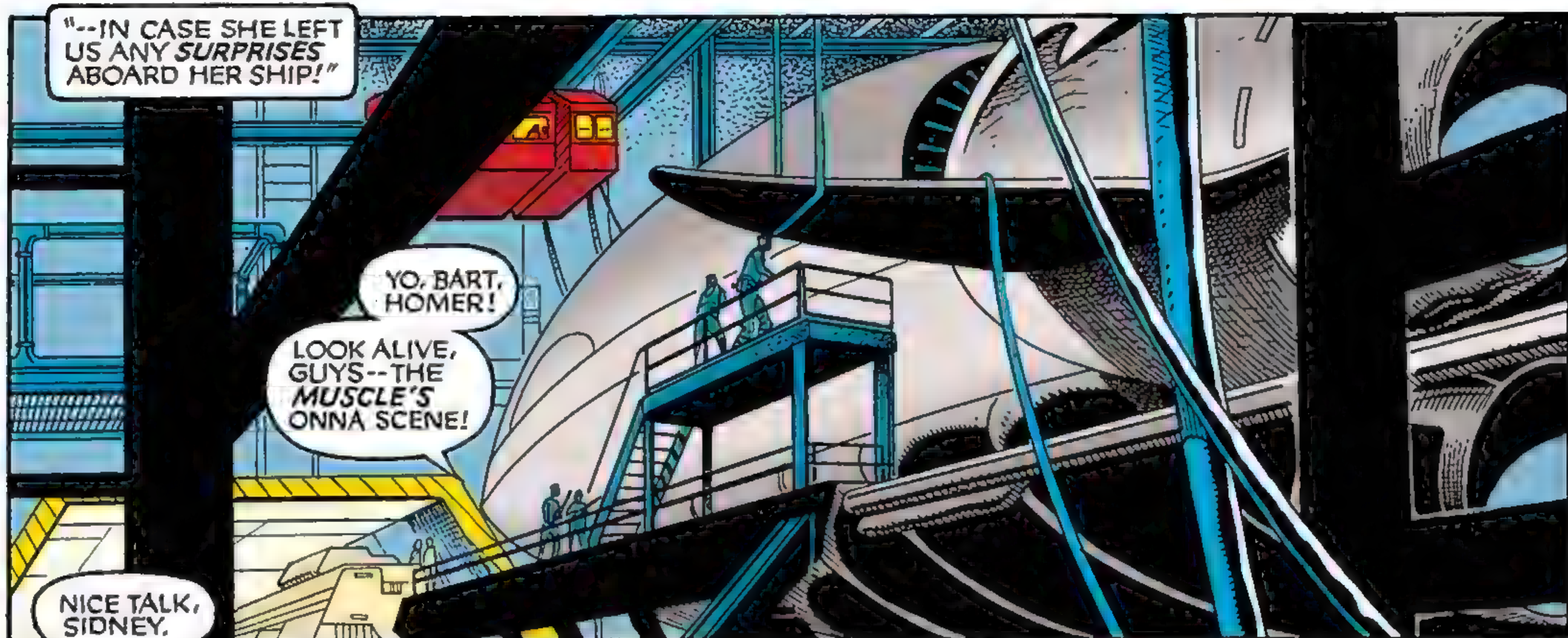
DON'T PASS FINAL JUDGMENT JUST YET, NOT UNTIL YOU'VE SEEN THE **IMPRINTING TEMPLATES** I'VE PREPARED. BY THE TIME WE'RE DONE **REPROGRAMMING** HER, SHE'LL BE **UNRECOGNIZABLE**-- EVEN TO **LUCIEN DELACROIX** HIMSELF!

"EACH ELEMENT IS TAKEN TO ITS *ULTIMATE*, OFFERING THE WIDEST POSSIBLE RANGE OF TASTES AND PLEASURES. AND, BEST OF ALL, SHE'LL HAVE NO INHIBITIONS. THE CLIENT-- HER *OWNER*-- WILL BE THE MORAL CENTER OF HER REALITY. HER SOLE FUNCTION WILL BE TO PROVIDE ABSOLUTE SATISFACTION.









"--IN CASE SHE LEFT US ANY *SURPRISES* ABOARD HER SHIP!"

YO, BART, HOMER!

LOOK ALIVE, GUYS--THE *MUSCLE'S* ONNA SCENE!

NICE TALK, SIDNEY.



YOU'LL MAYBE SING A DIF'RENT TUNE, THE TIME EVER COMES WHEN WE HAVE TO SAVE *YOUR* SKINNY PINK BUTT.

THAT'LL BE THE DAY!

THE SEAL'S STILL SOLID ON THE OUTER HATCH, SO THE AIRLOCK SHOULD CYCLE WITHOUT A PROBLEM.

WE'D BE INSIDE ALREADY, IF WE HADN'T HAD TO WAIT FOR YOU TWO.



KIRA'S NERVOUS. SHE WANTS THE ENVIRONMENT TREATED AS *HOSTILE*.

GIMME A BREAK!



WE SCANNED THE INTERIOR, GENNA. WE GOT ZIP.

KIRA'S GOT NO CAUSE TO WORRY.



I GUARANTEE-- YOU AN' HER BOTH--

--THIS HULK'S EMPTY--

--YAGKCH!



BACK!
EVERYBODY,
BACK!

CLEAR
THIS
PLATFORM!

CEN-COM, THIS IS GENNA,
BAY 27-- I WANT A MEDEVAC
CRASH TEAM, ON SCENE, ON
THE DOUBLE!

HOMER'S COUGHING BLOOD--
I THINK THERE'S MAJOR LUNG
TRAUMA-- NO OTHER
CASUALTIES.



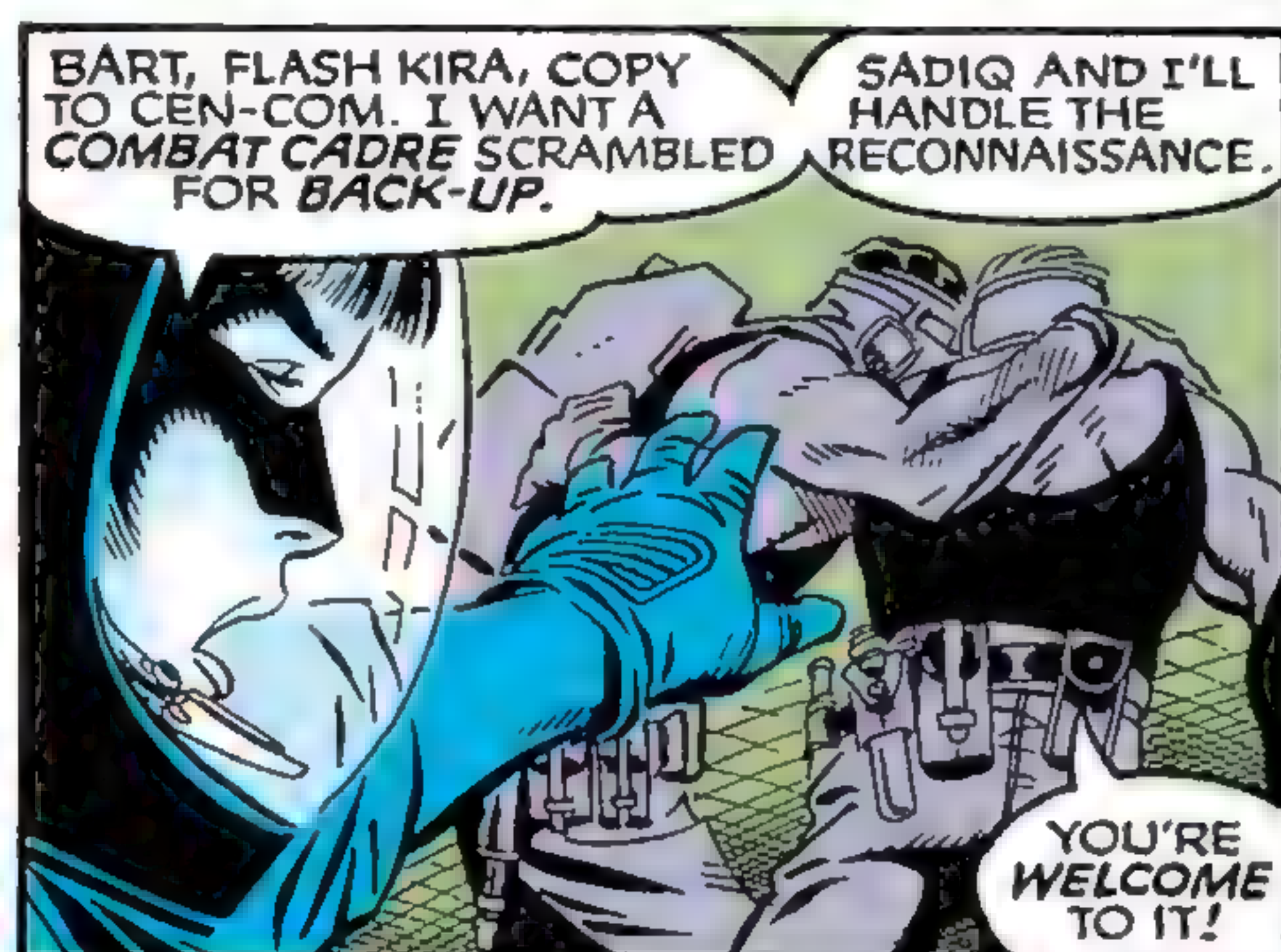
AIRLOCK'S
COVERED,
PARTNER!
YOUR
BACK'S
CLEAR!

CHILL,
SADIQ.
IT'S A HOSTILE
ATMOSPHERE,
NOTHING
MORE.



IZZAT SO? YOU WANNA
TELL ME THEN HOW A
STANDARD HUMAN
BIOFORM CAN BREATHE
METHANE?

SOLE
PASSENGER
WAS A
TROPHY.
MAYBE SHE
DOESN'T NEED
TO BREATHE
AT ALL.



BART, FLASH KIRA, COPY
TO CEN-COM. I WANT A
COMBAT CADRE SCRAMBLED
FOR BACK-UP.

SADIQ AND I'LL
HANDLE THE
RECONNAISSANCE.

YOU'RE
WELCOME
TO IT!



OKAY,
HOTBOT,
YOU
READY
TO PLAY
HERO?

AND HERE
I THOUGHT
YOU ONLY
VALUED ME
FOR MY
GOOD
LOOKS.



TEMPTING THOUGHT--
IF YOU *HAD* ANY.

INITIATING FULL-
SPECTRUM SCAN.

NEGATIVE
MOVEMENT,
NEGATIVE
LIFESIGNS,
MINIMAL
POWER
EMANATIONS.

WHAT'D I
TELL YOU? A
DERELICT.
THE TROPHY
PROBABLY
CAME OUT OF
A FREEZER,
RAN STRAIGHT
FOR THE
EXIT.

IF YOU
SAY SO.

THAT BEIN'
THE CASE, SWEET,
MIND EXPLAININ'
THIS?



'PEARS LIKE OUR TROPHY'S BEEN COLLECTIN' SOME OF HER OWN.

BLESSED BUDDHA, THAT'S A QUEEN!

NO OFFENSE, GENNA, BUT I FIGURE WE'RE AS FAR INBOARD AS WE SHOULD GO WITHOUT SUPPORT.



POINT TAKEN. I'M SCOPING A LOCALIZED ENERGY NEXUS. THERE'S A LIVE INTERNAL SYSTEM, FAIRLY CLOSE BY. WE'LL CHECK IT OUT, THEN RABBIT. SATISFIED?



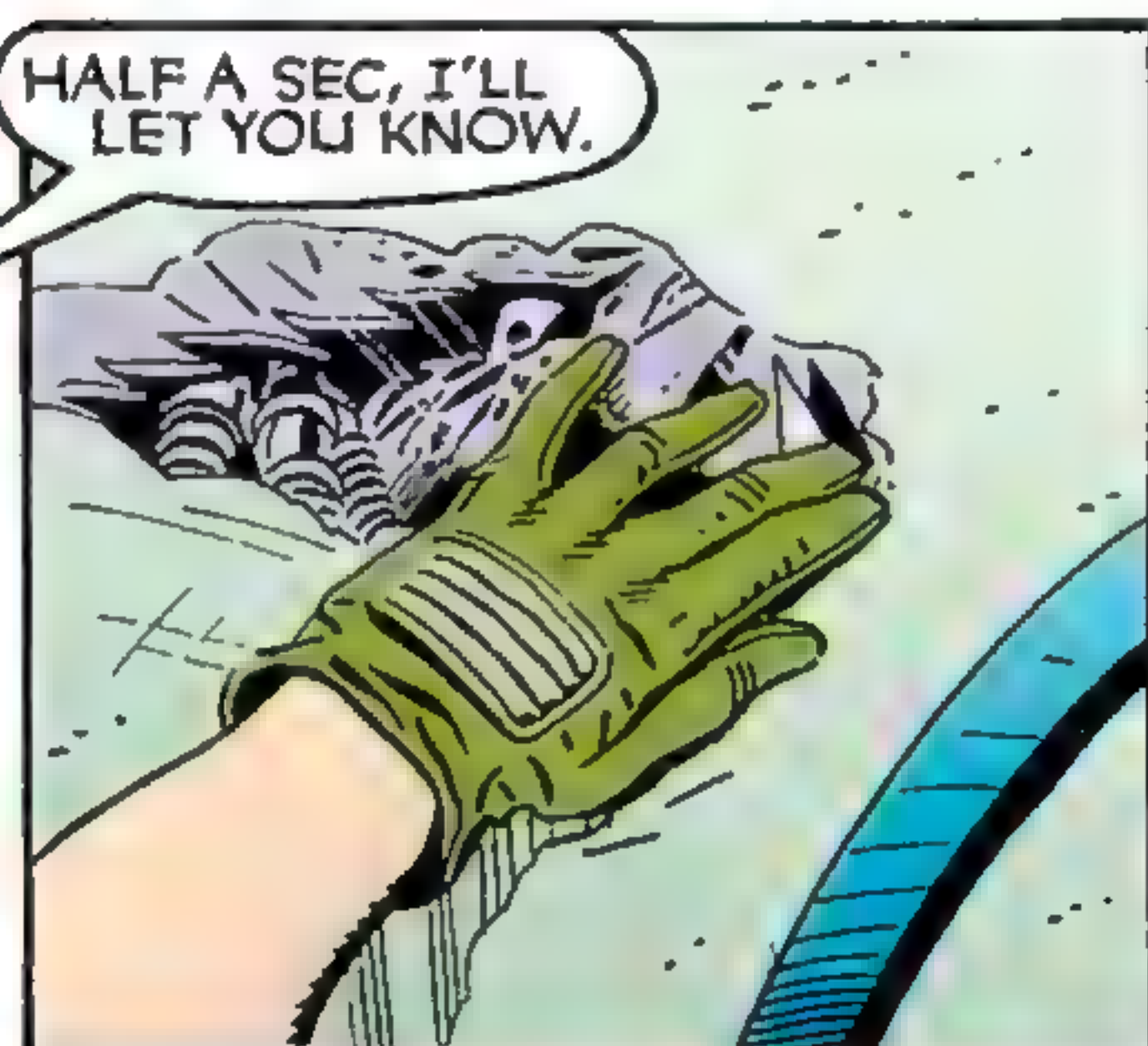
YOU GOT THE RANK-- GUESS THAT MEANS YOU GOT THE BRAINS.

UP YOURS.

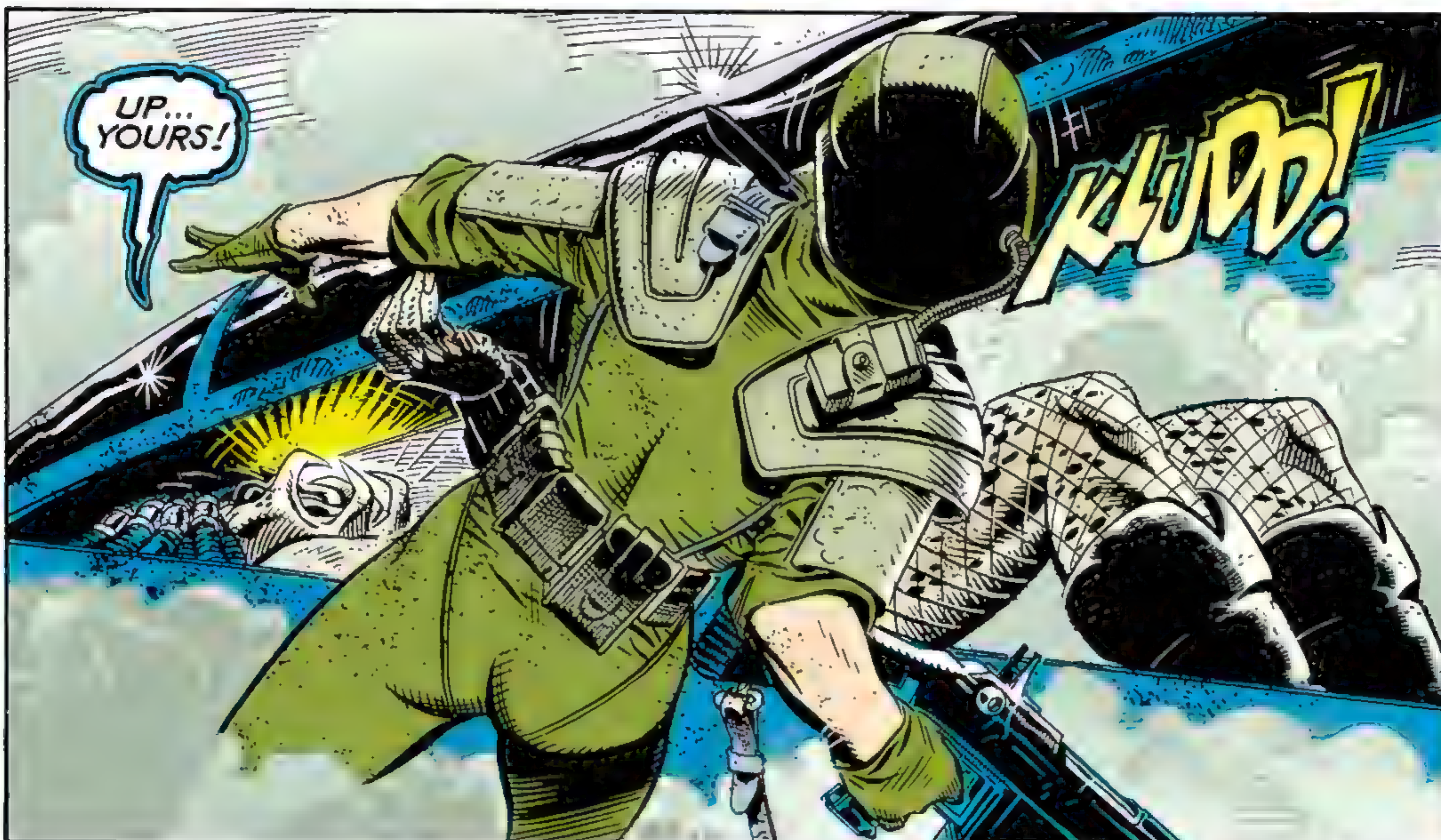
IT'S A LIFEPOD! FLASH KIRA, SADIQ, I THINK WE'VE GOT ANOTHER LIVE ONE!



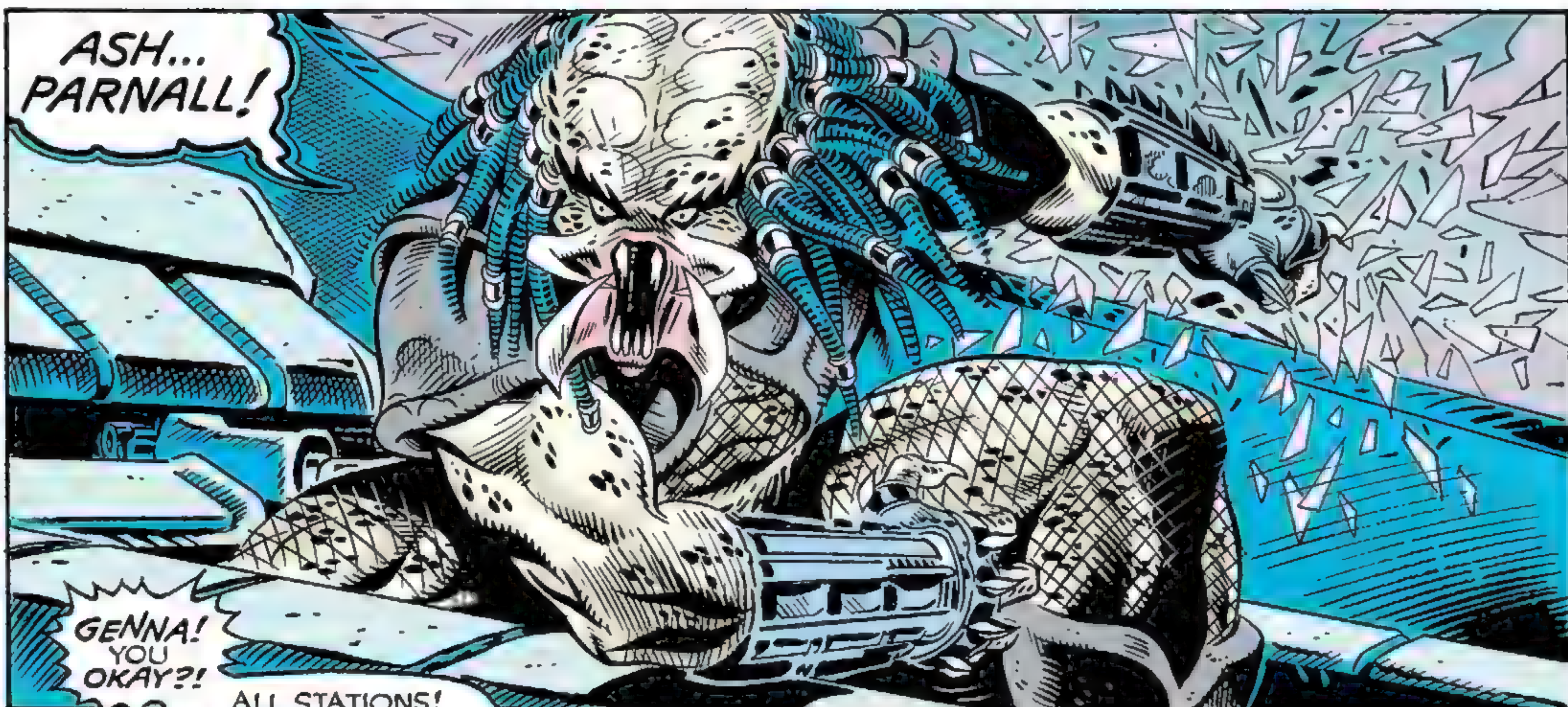
OUT- STANDING. ANOTHER "LIVE ONE" WHAT?



HALF A SEC, I'LL LET YOU KNOW.

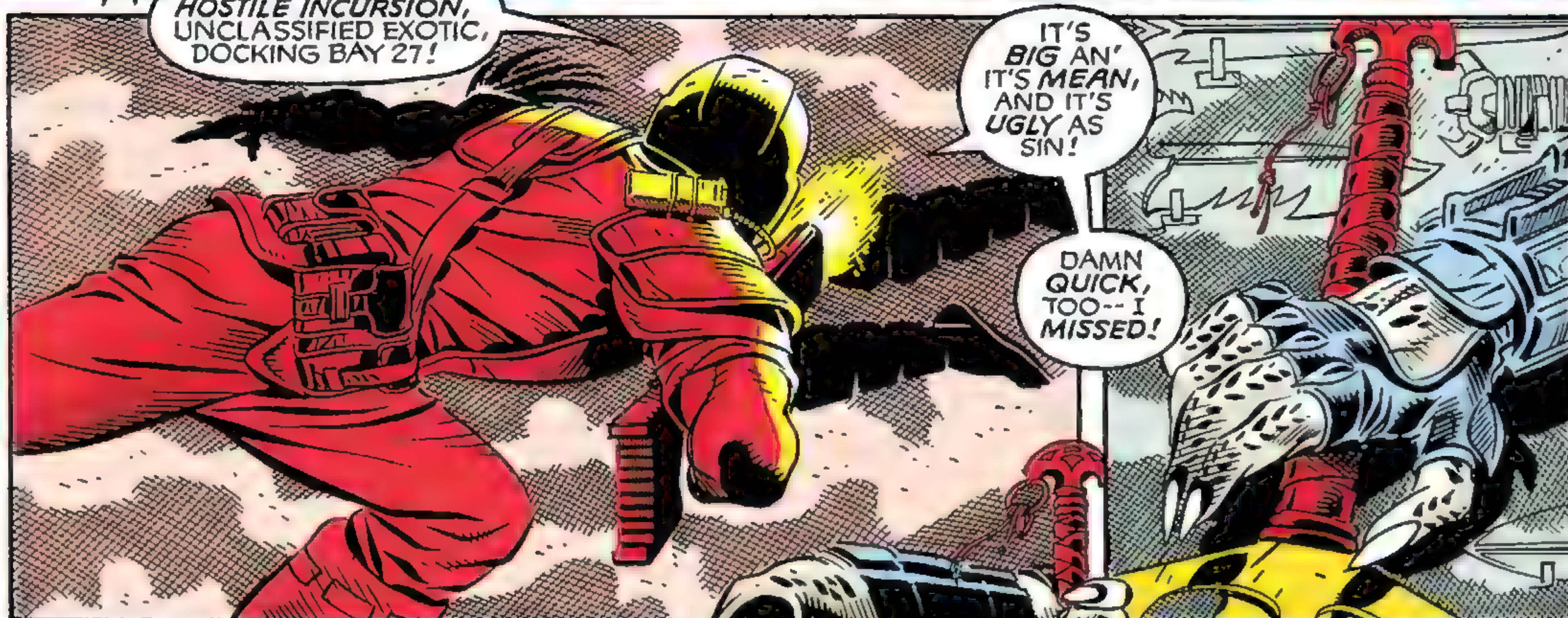


UP... YOURS!



GENNA!
YOU
OKAY?!

ALL STATIONS!
HOSTILE INCURSION,
UNCLASSIFIED EXOTIC,
DOCKING BAY 27!



I'M FINE, SADIQ.
JUST WONDERING
WHICH ONE IS
THE HITCH-
HIKER.

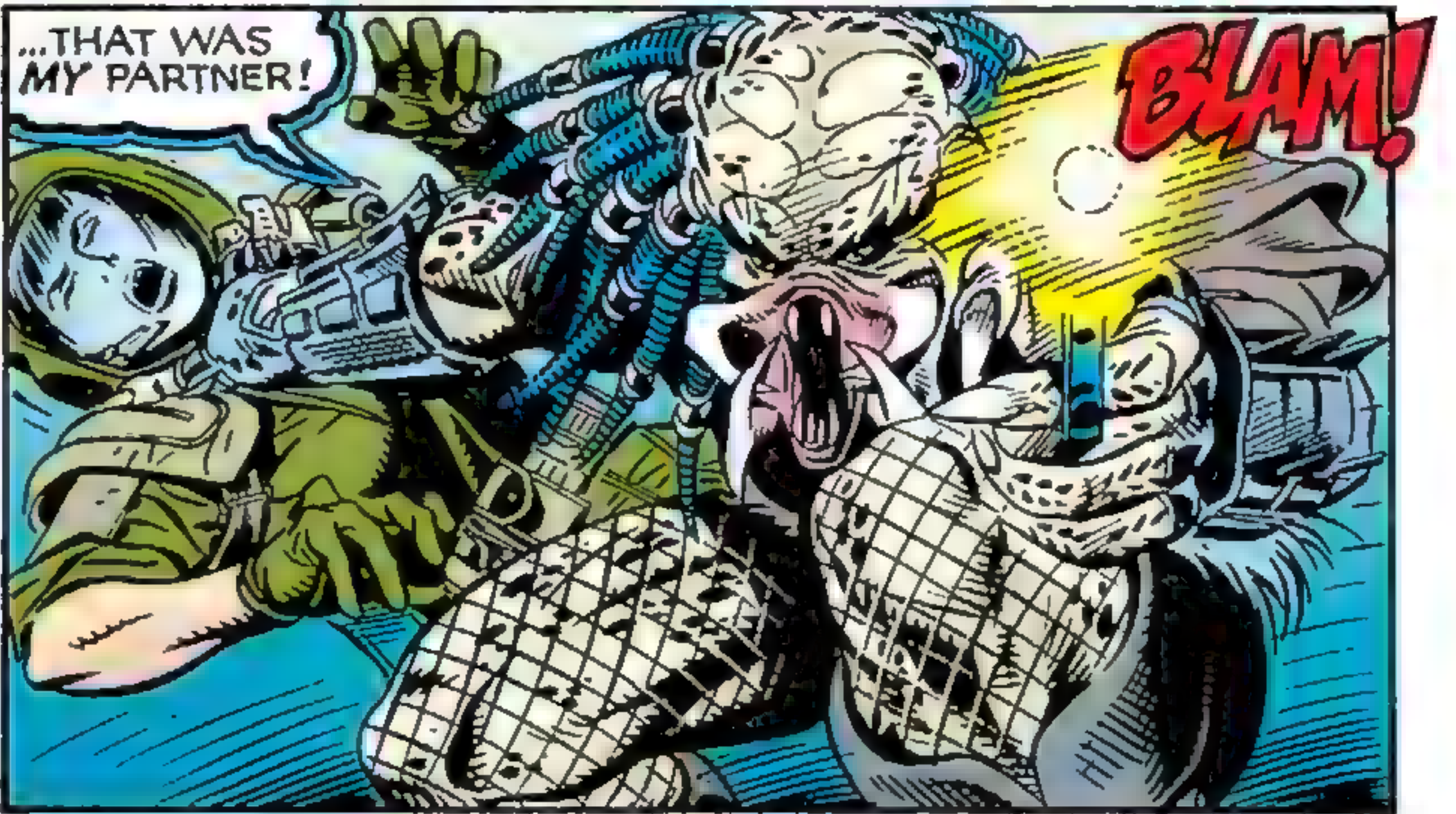
SOME
FOLKS'LL
PICK UP
ANY-
BODY.

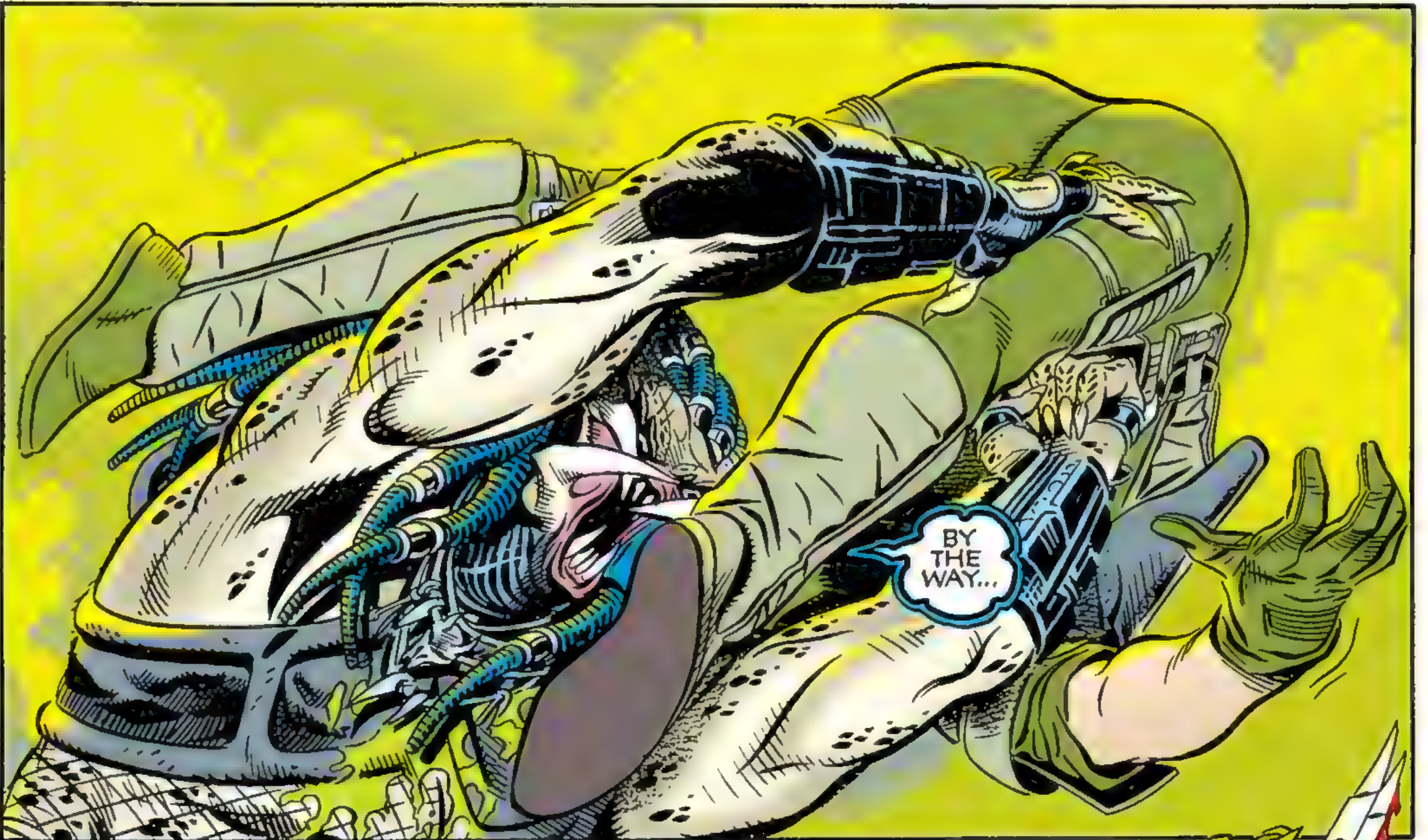
I DON'T LIKE
THIS, GENNA.
I GOT A CLEAN
SCREEN. IF IT'S
HERE, I CAN'T
SCAN IT--

NO!

I...
DON'T LIKE...
THIS...
GENNA!









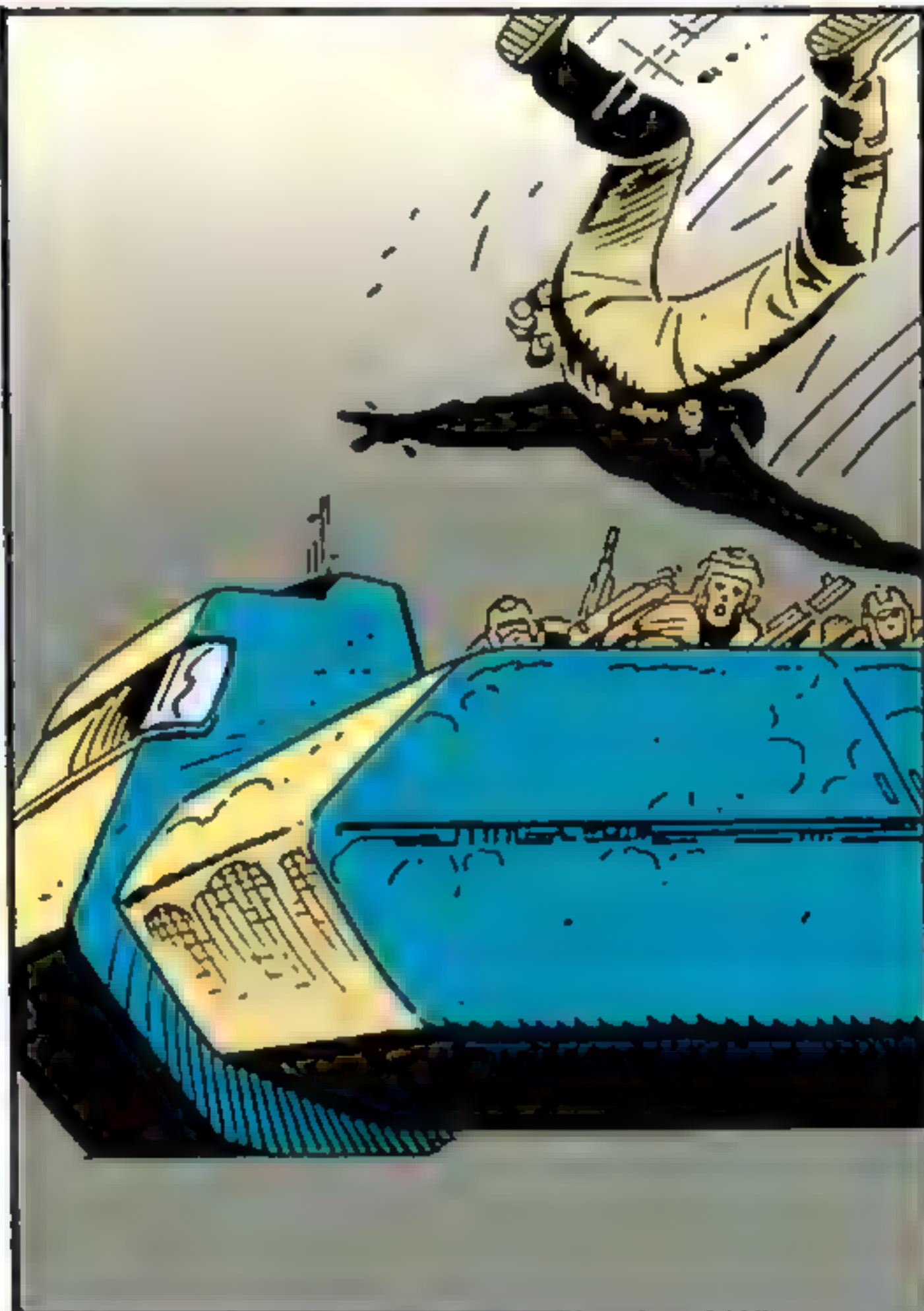
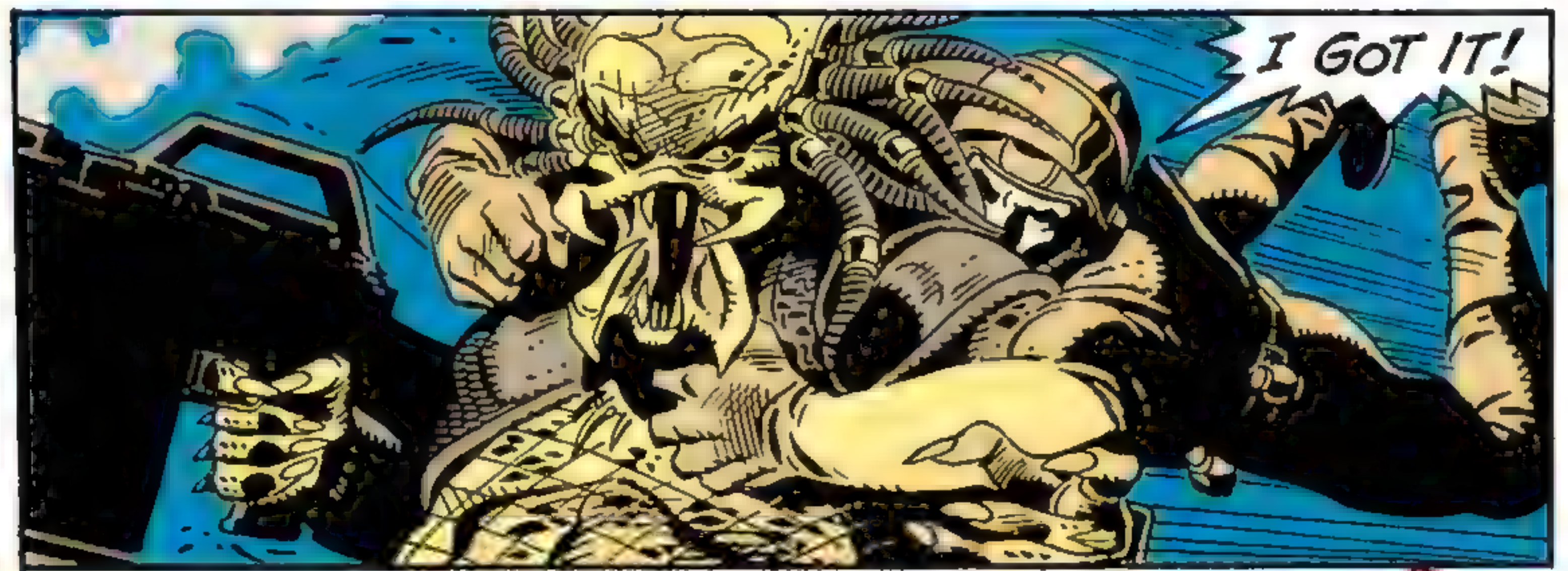
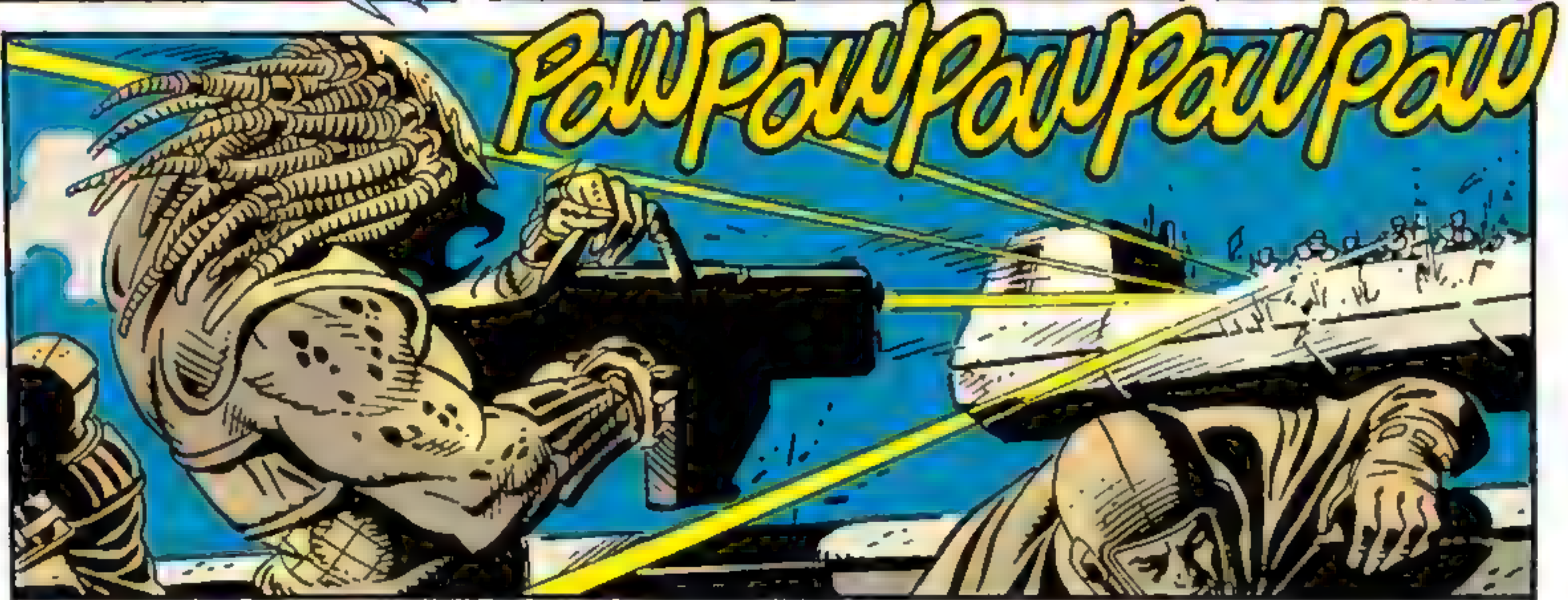
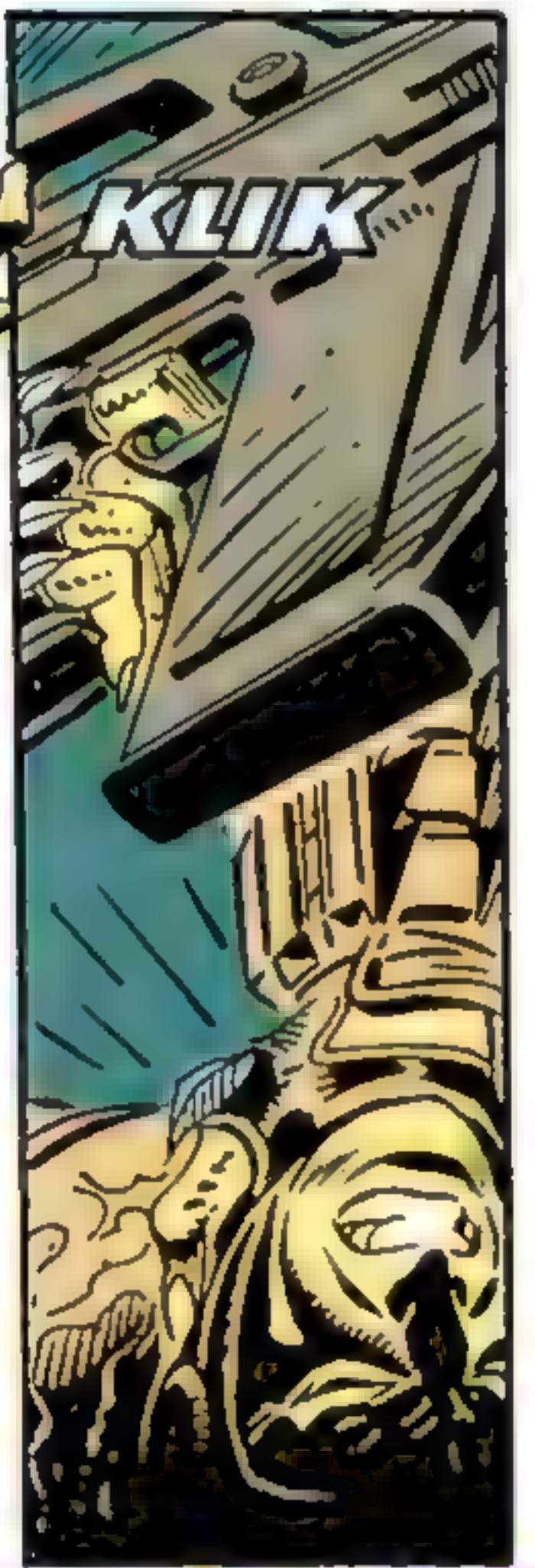


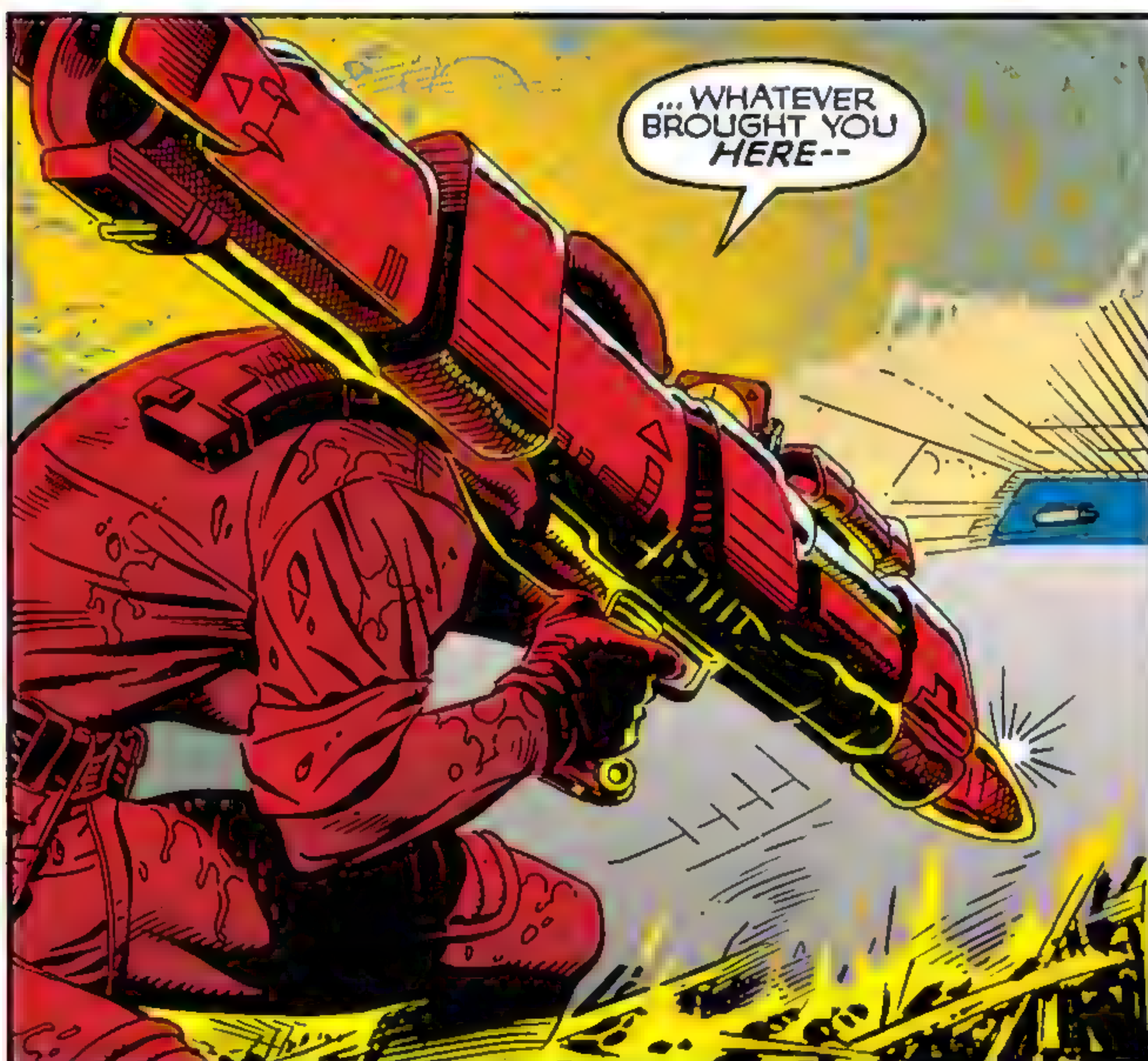
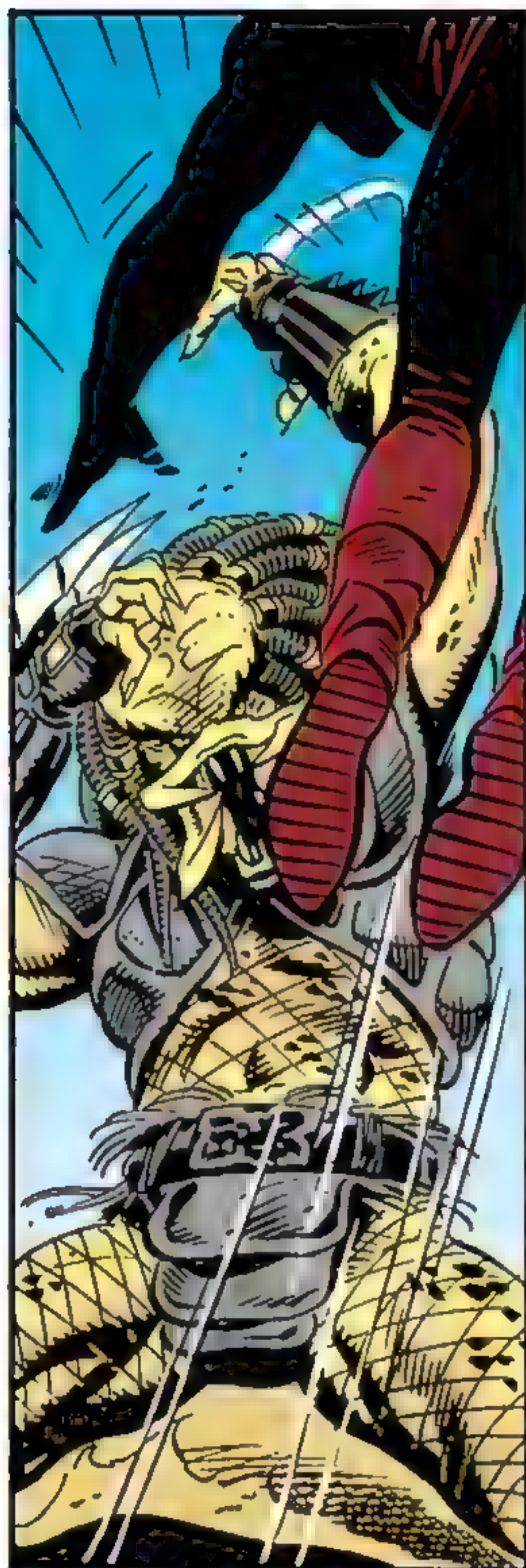
--SUCKER'S TERMINALLY UGLY, BUT IT LOOKS UNARMED.

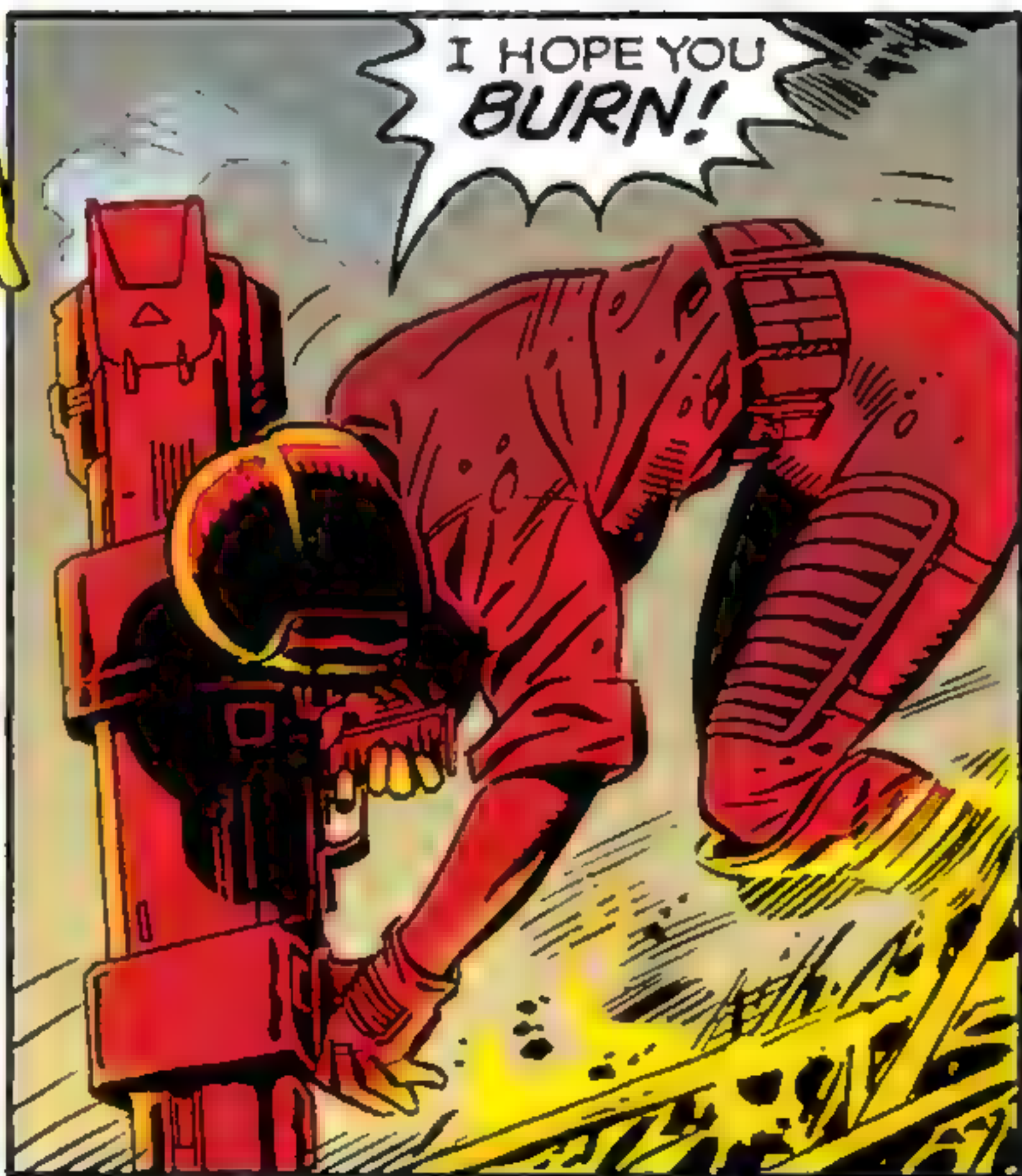
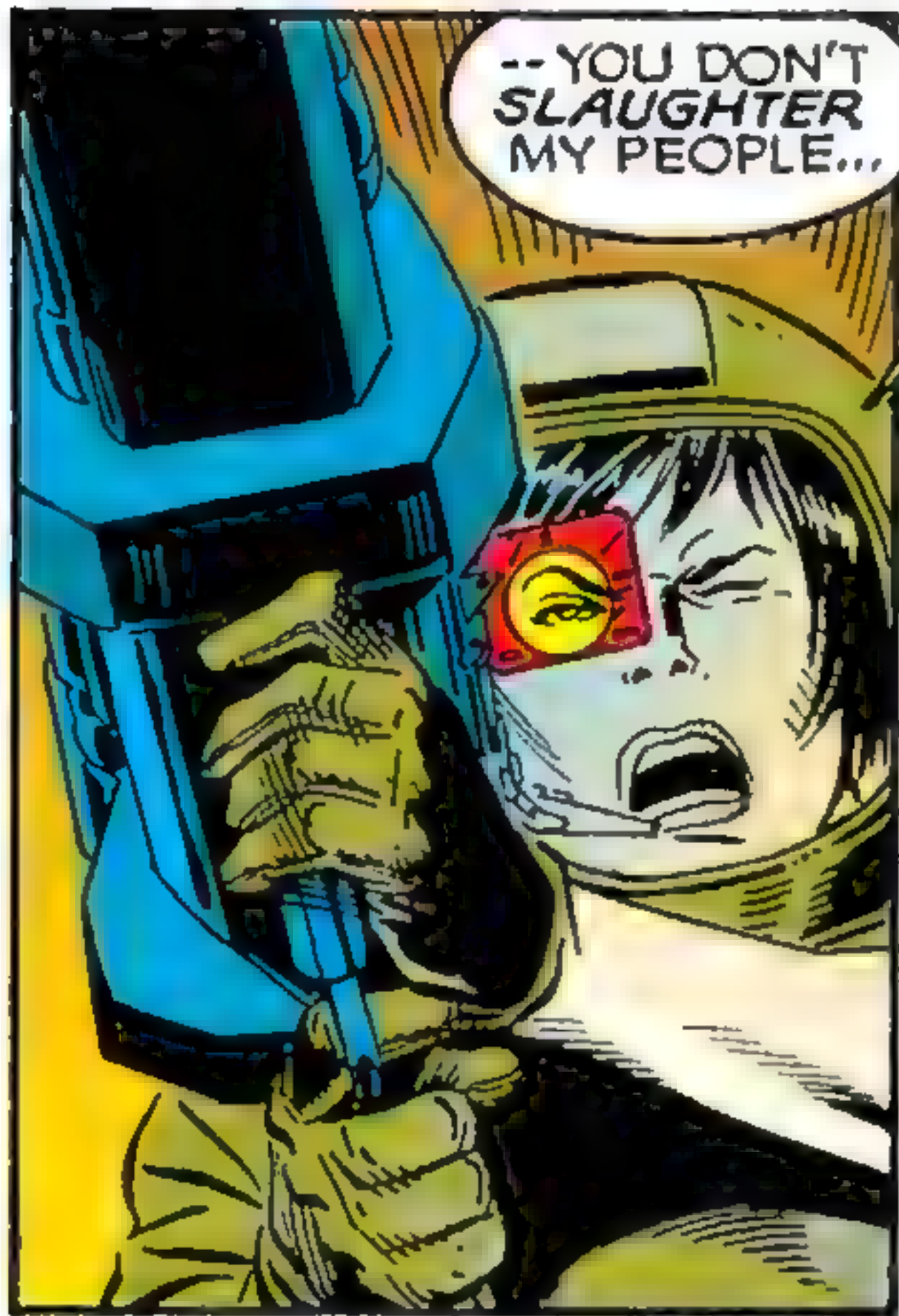
UNARMED?

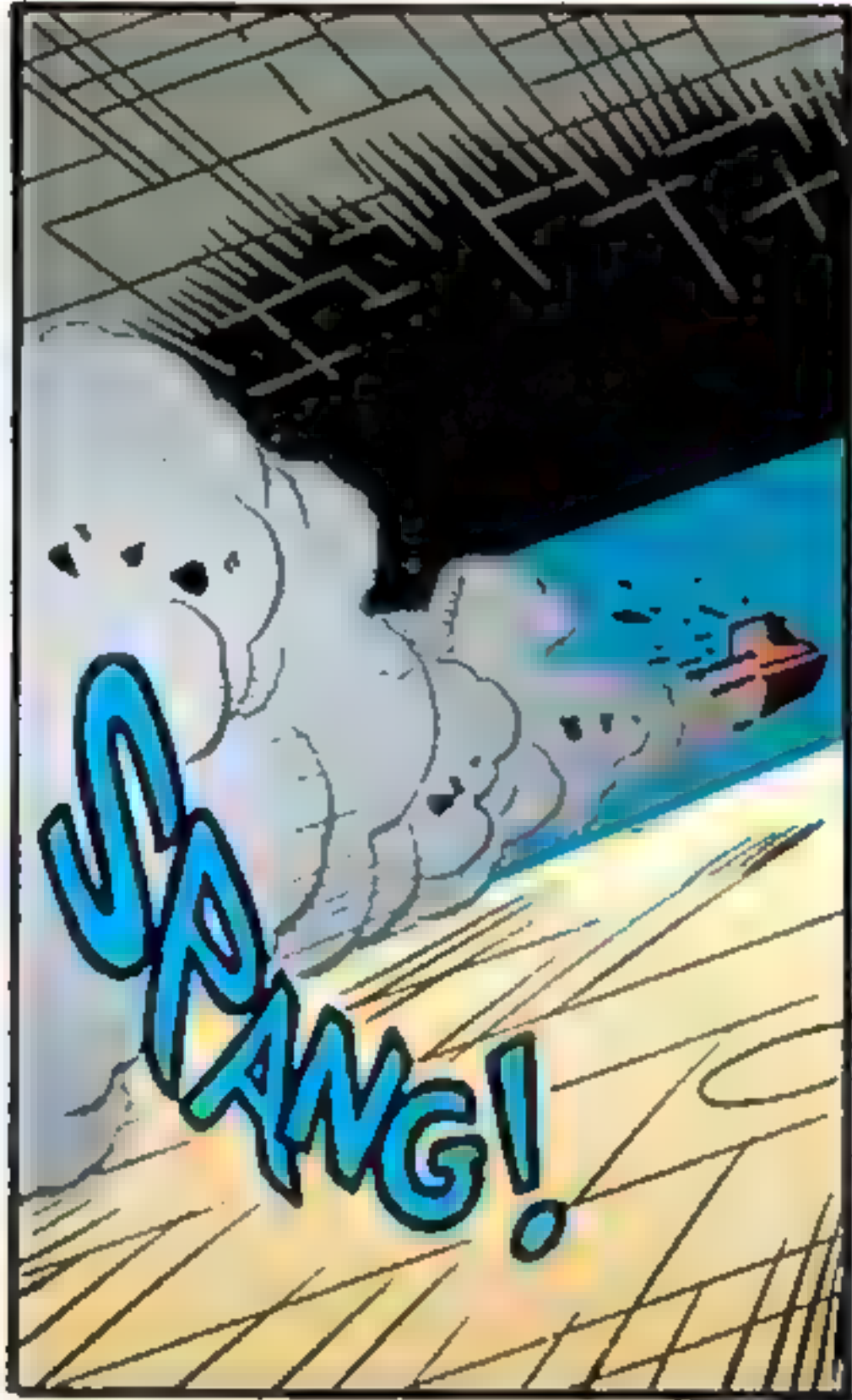


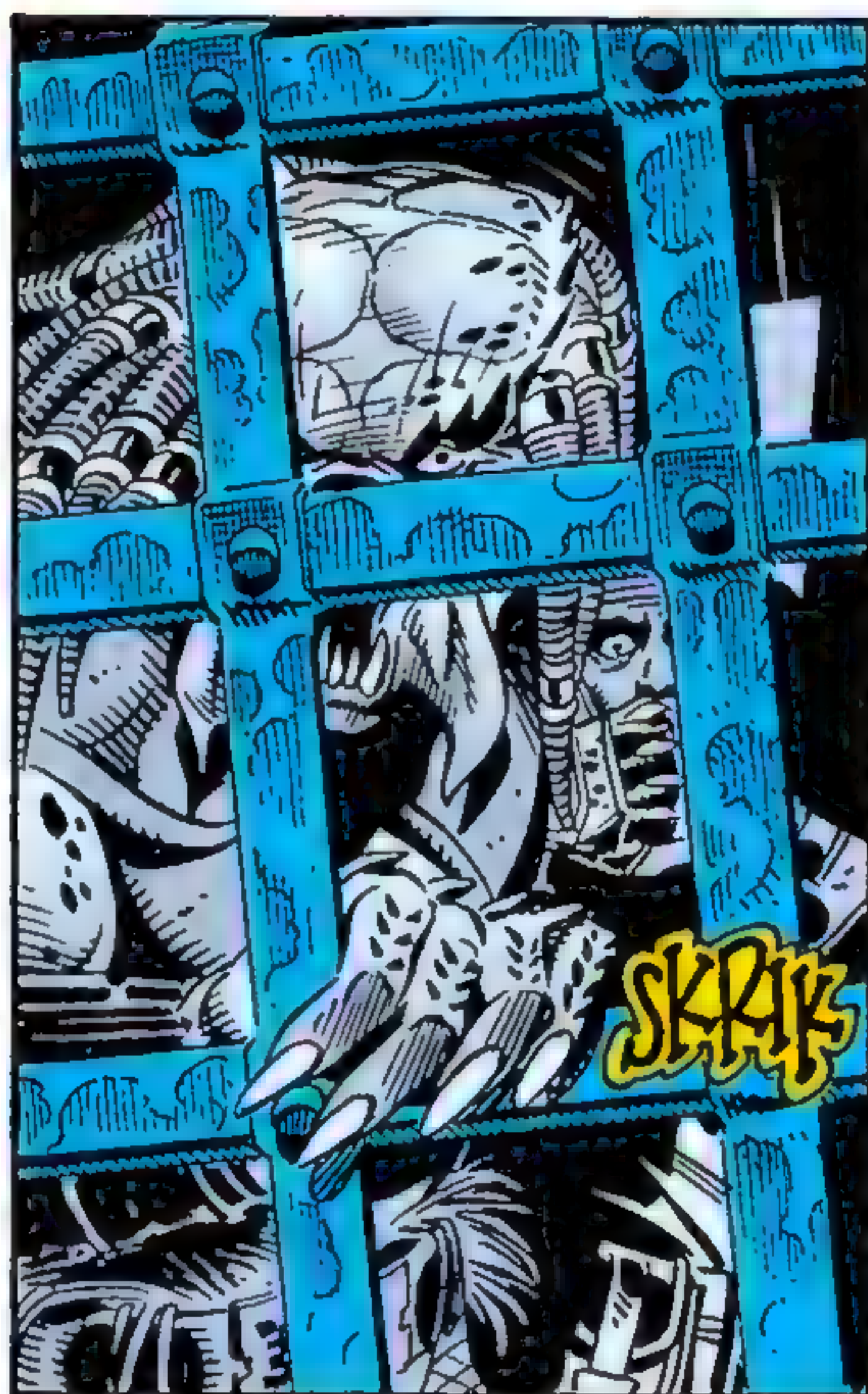
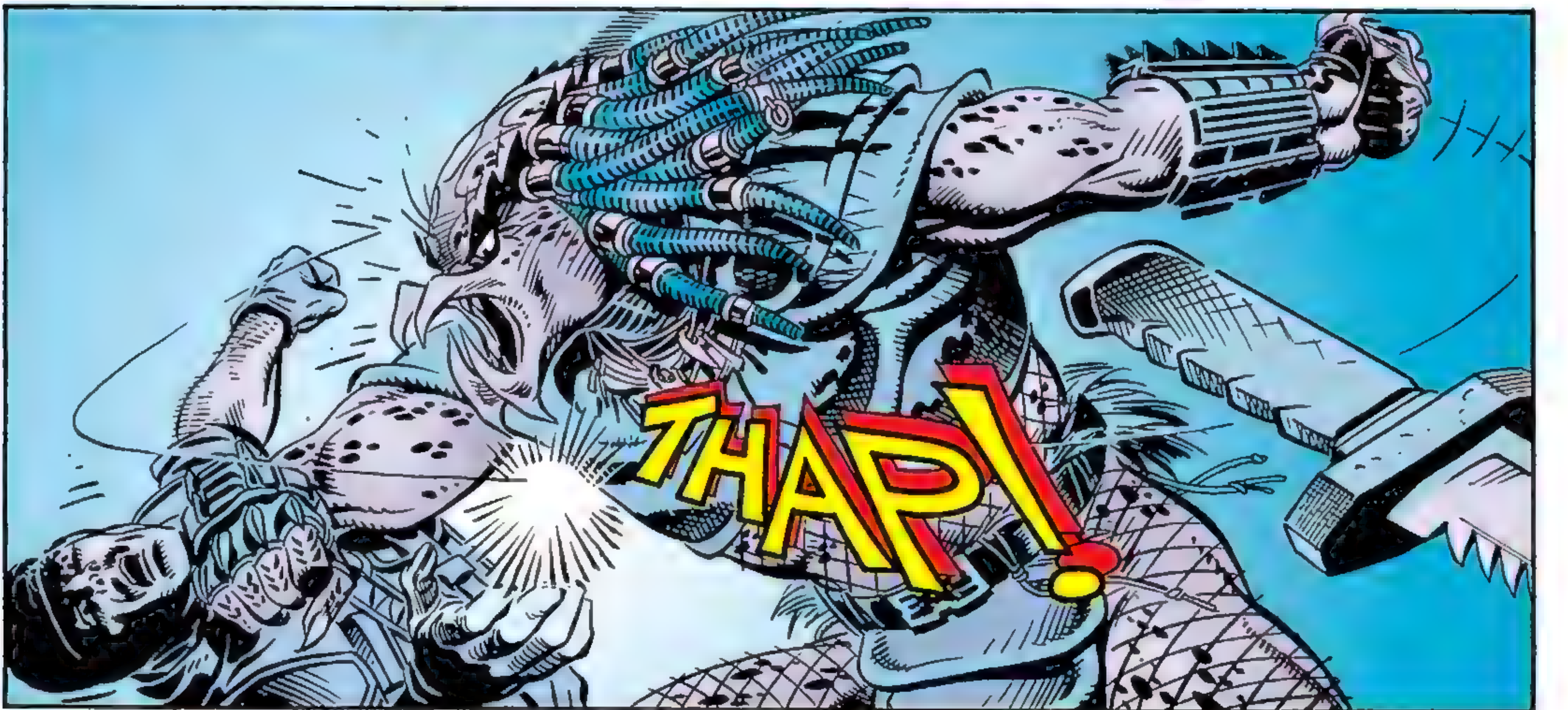
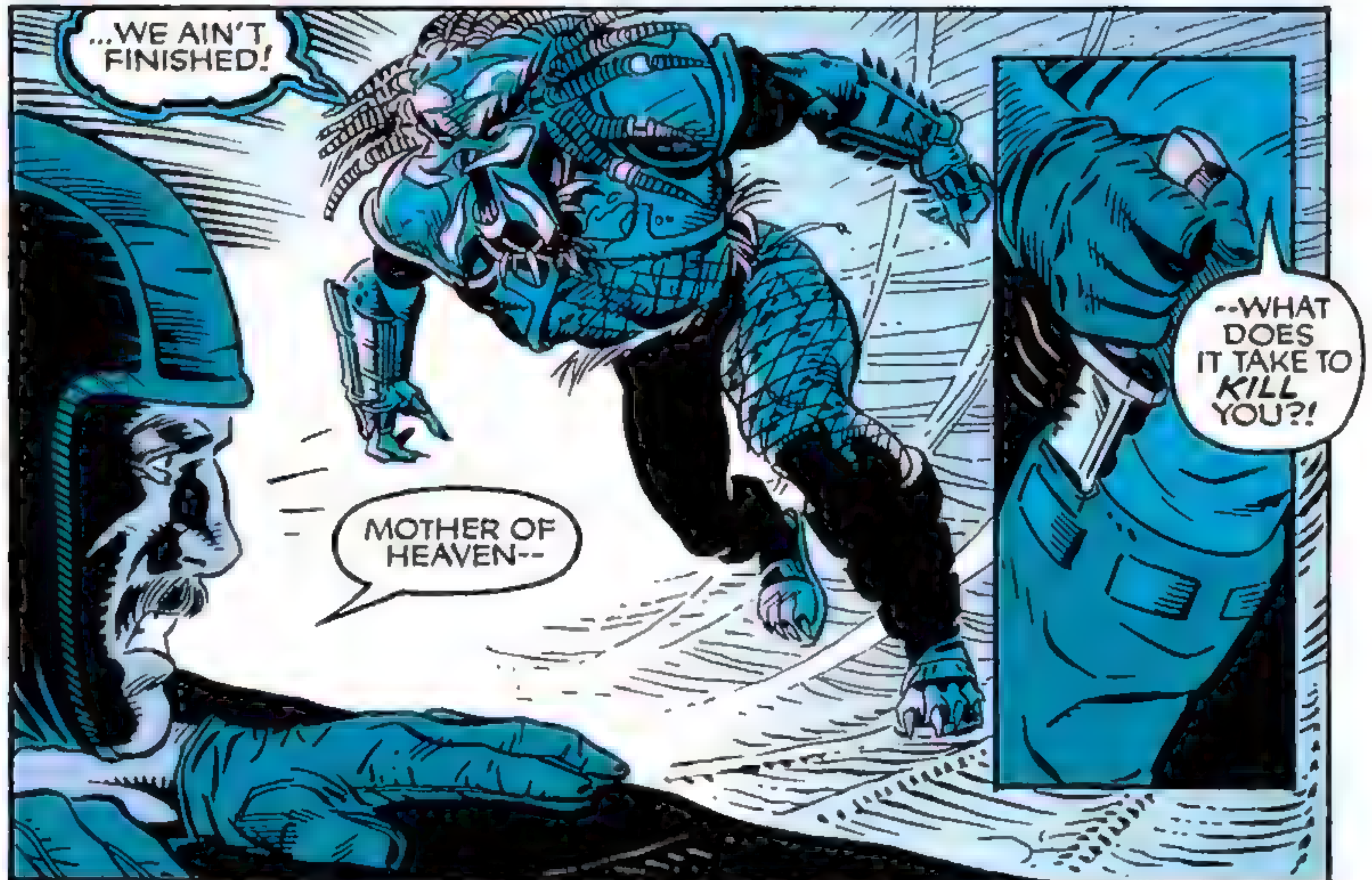
SNIK!

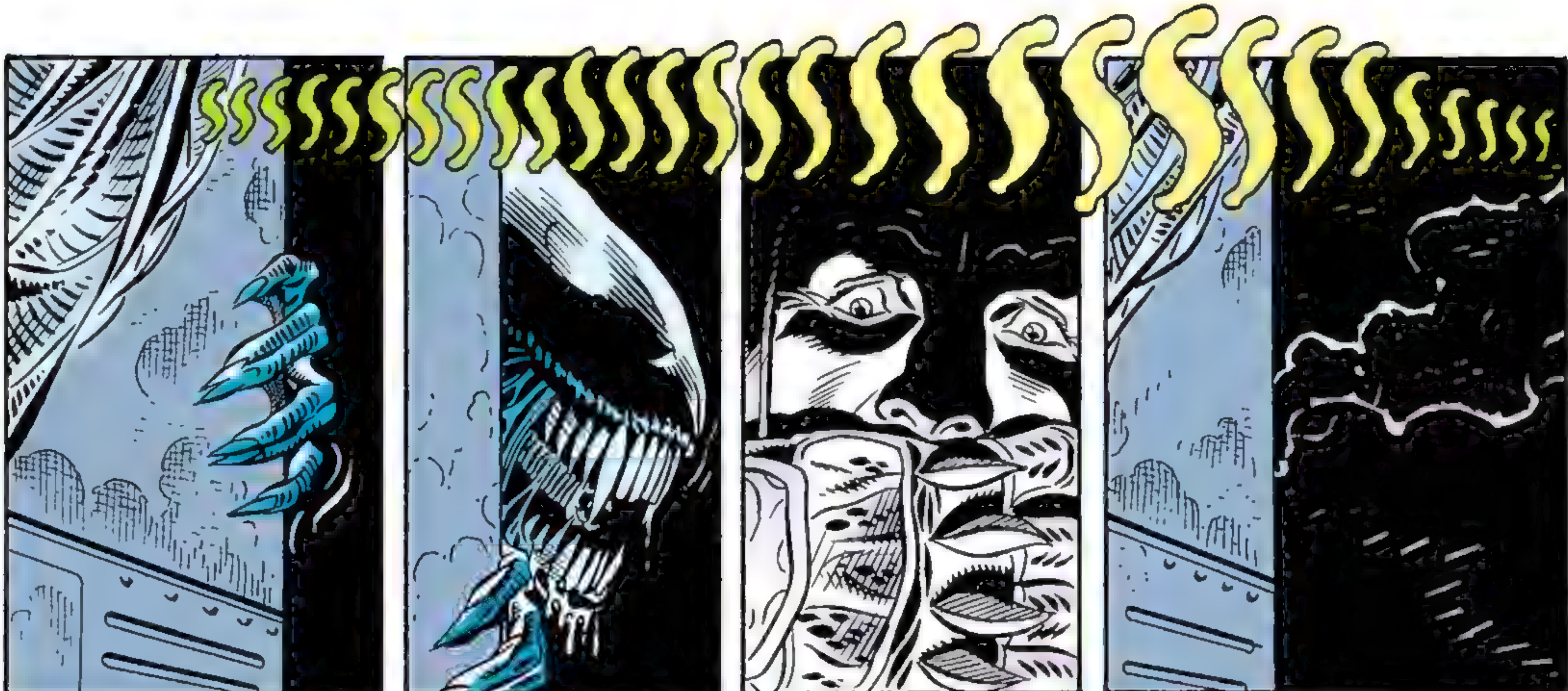


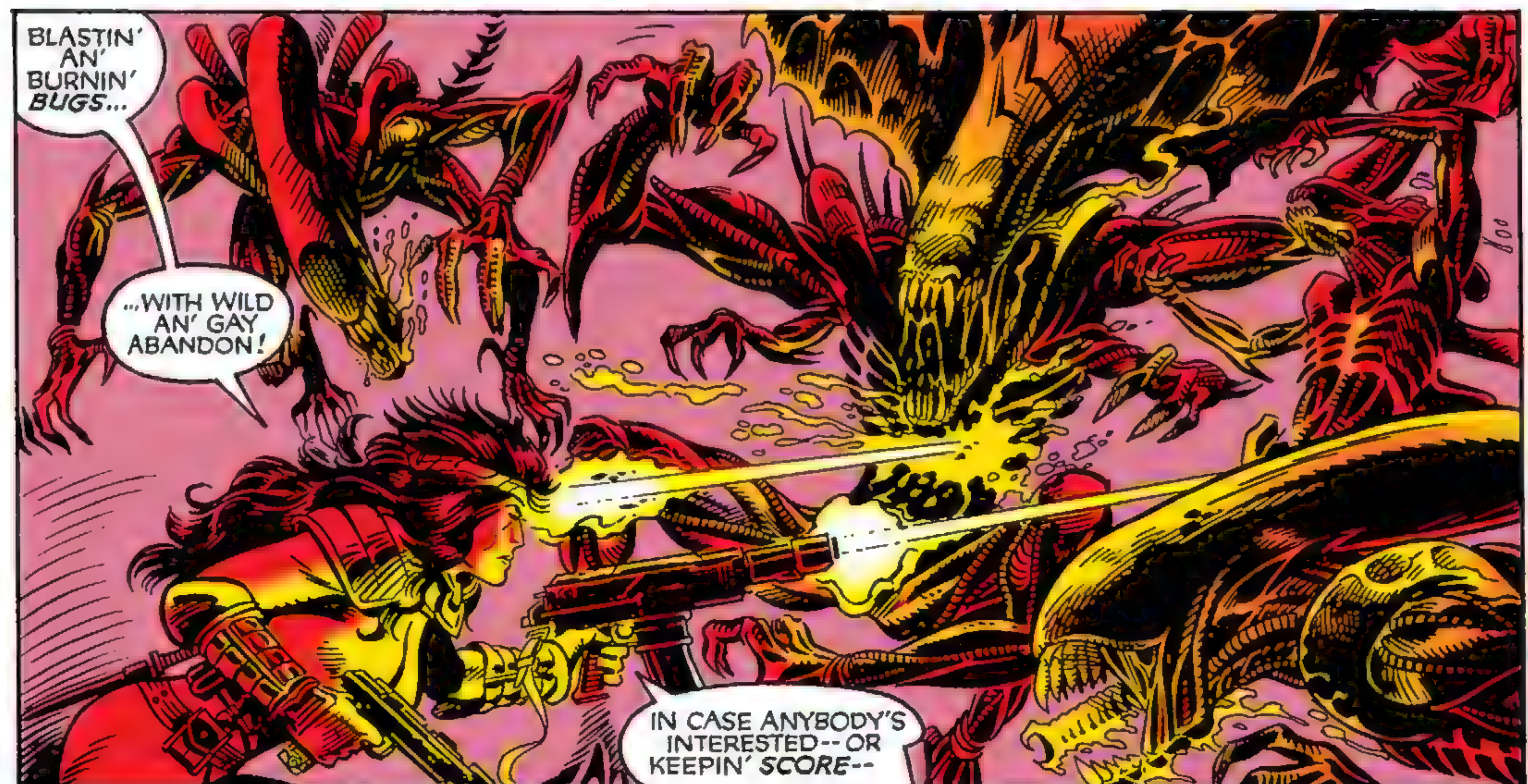
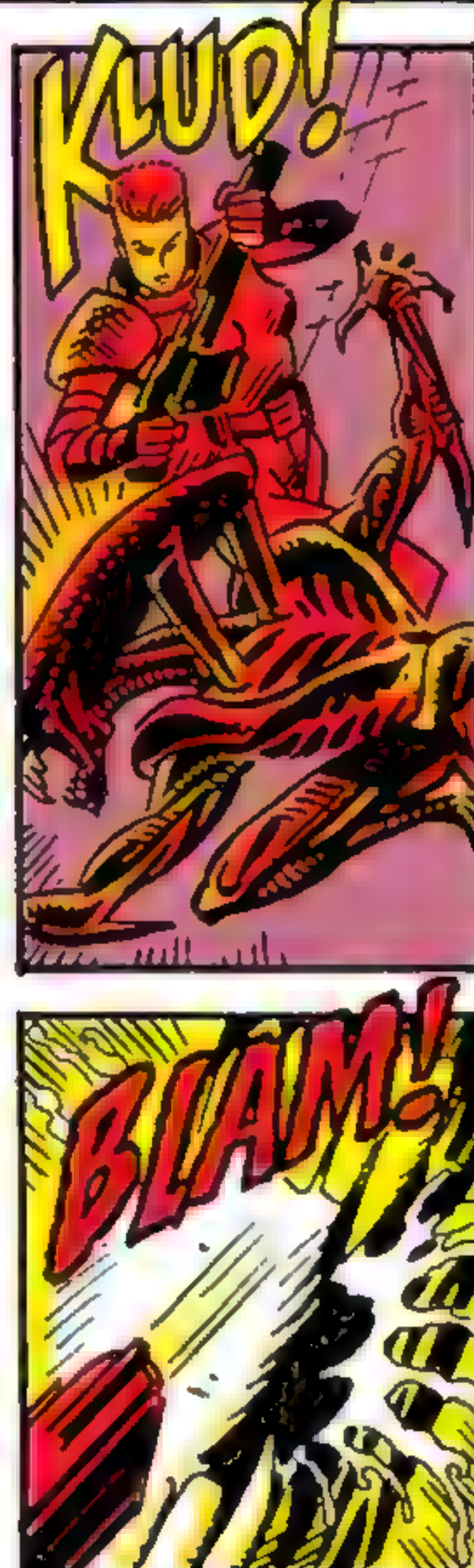
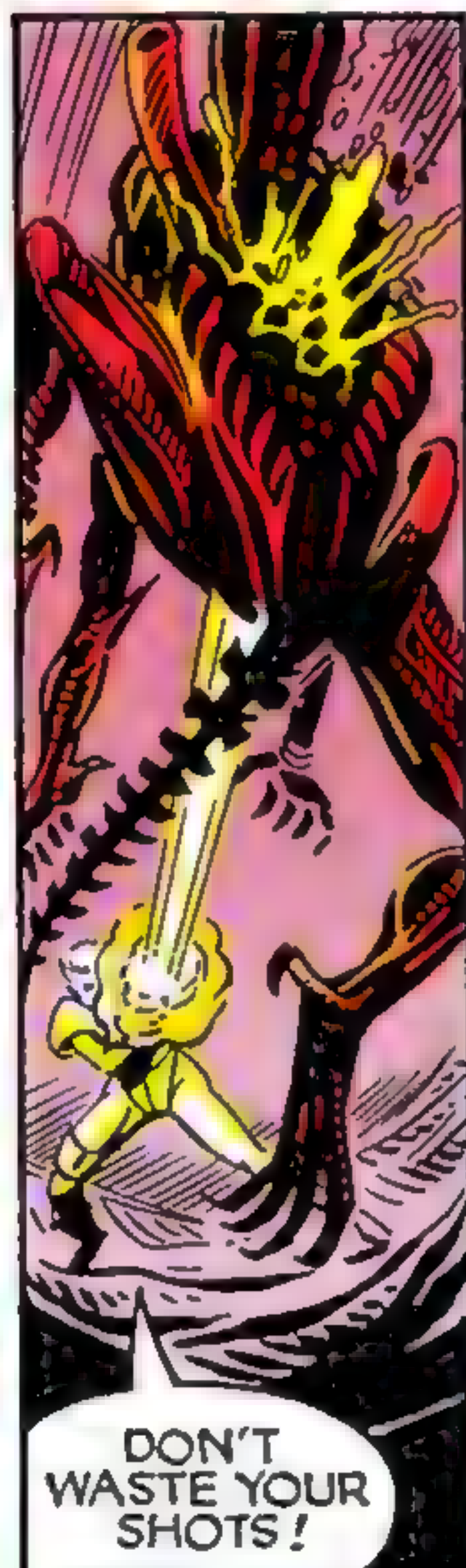
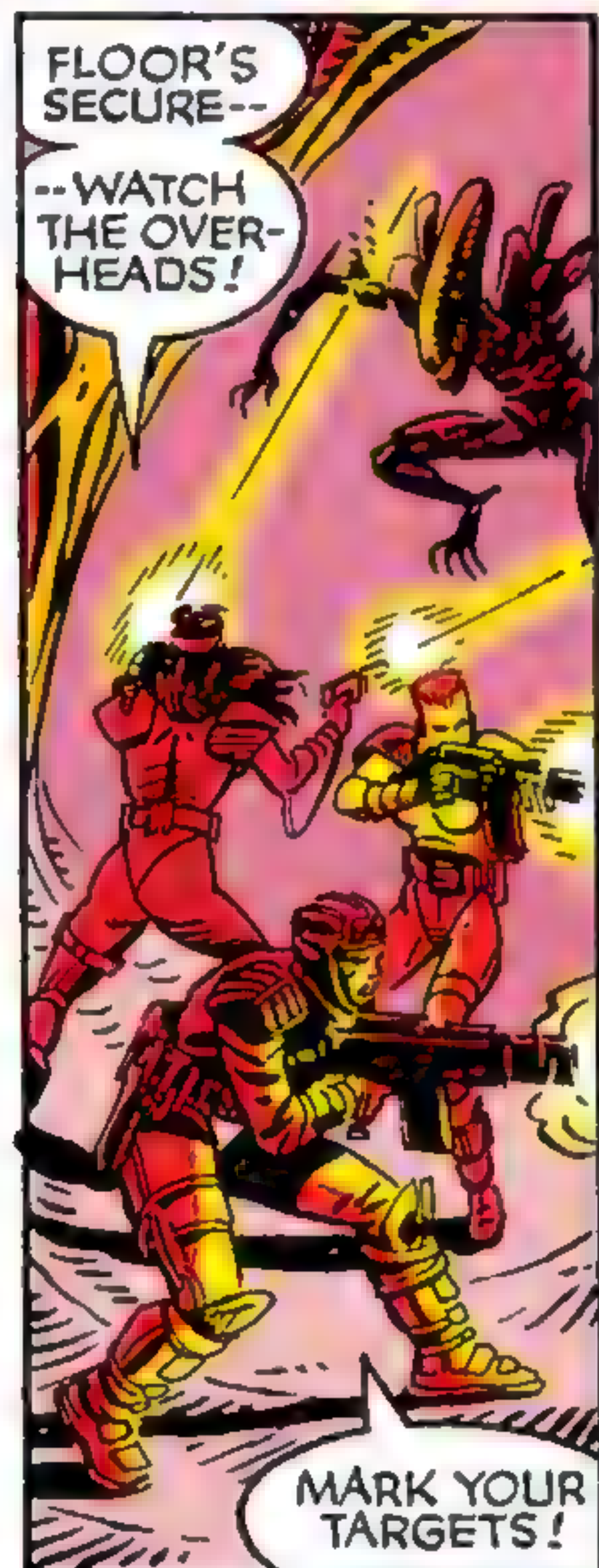
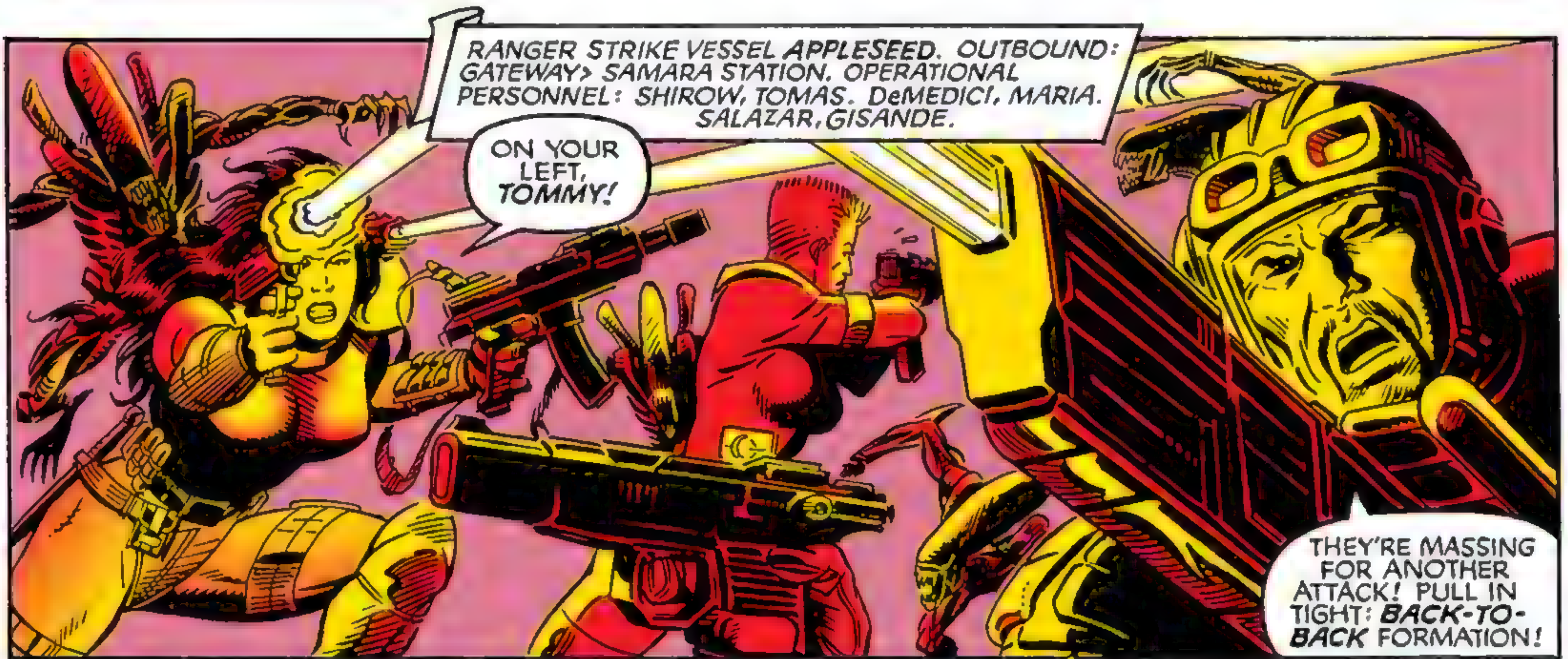


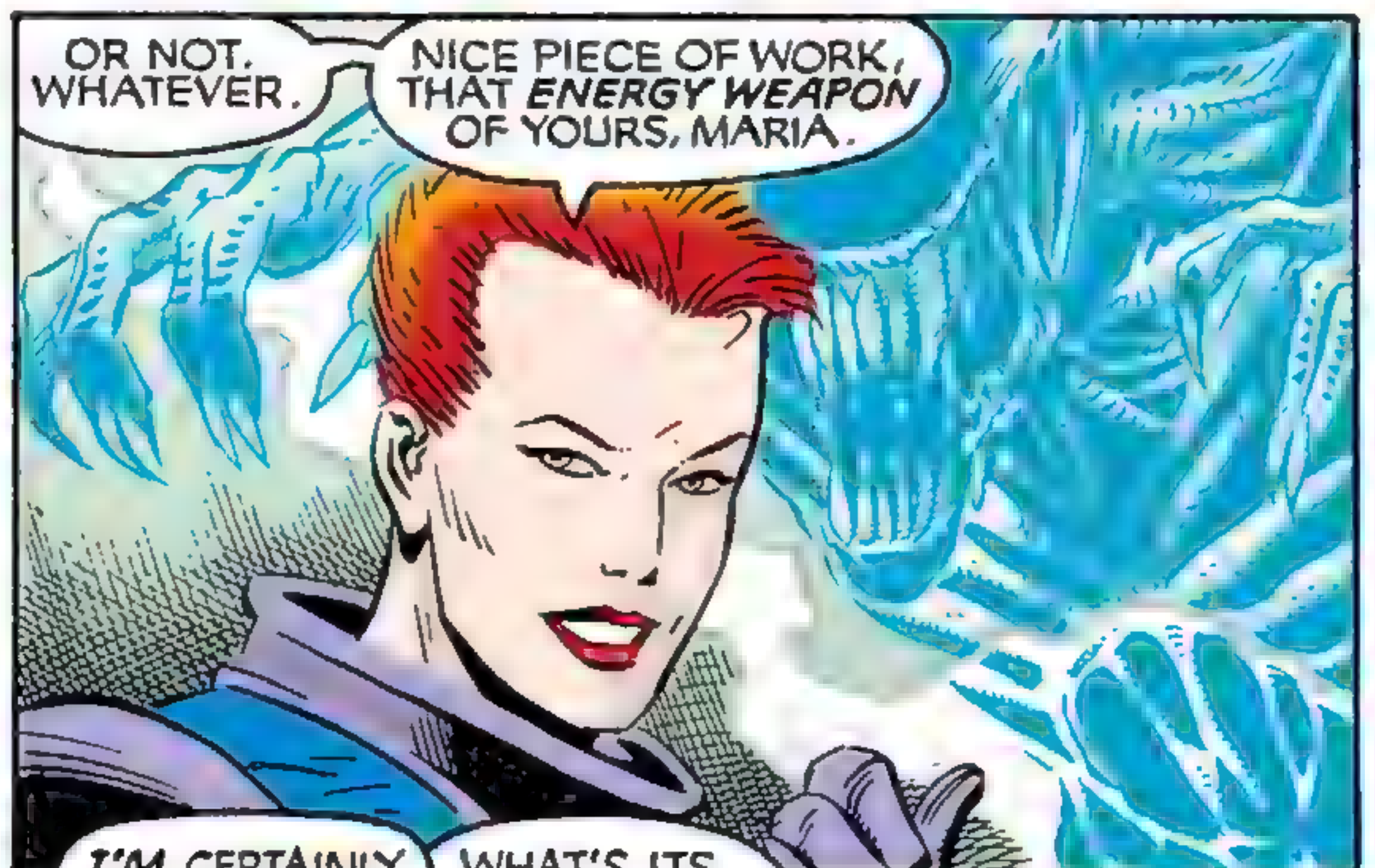


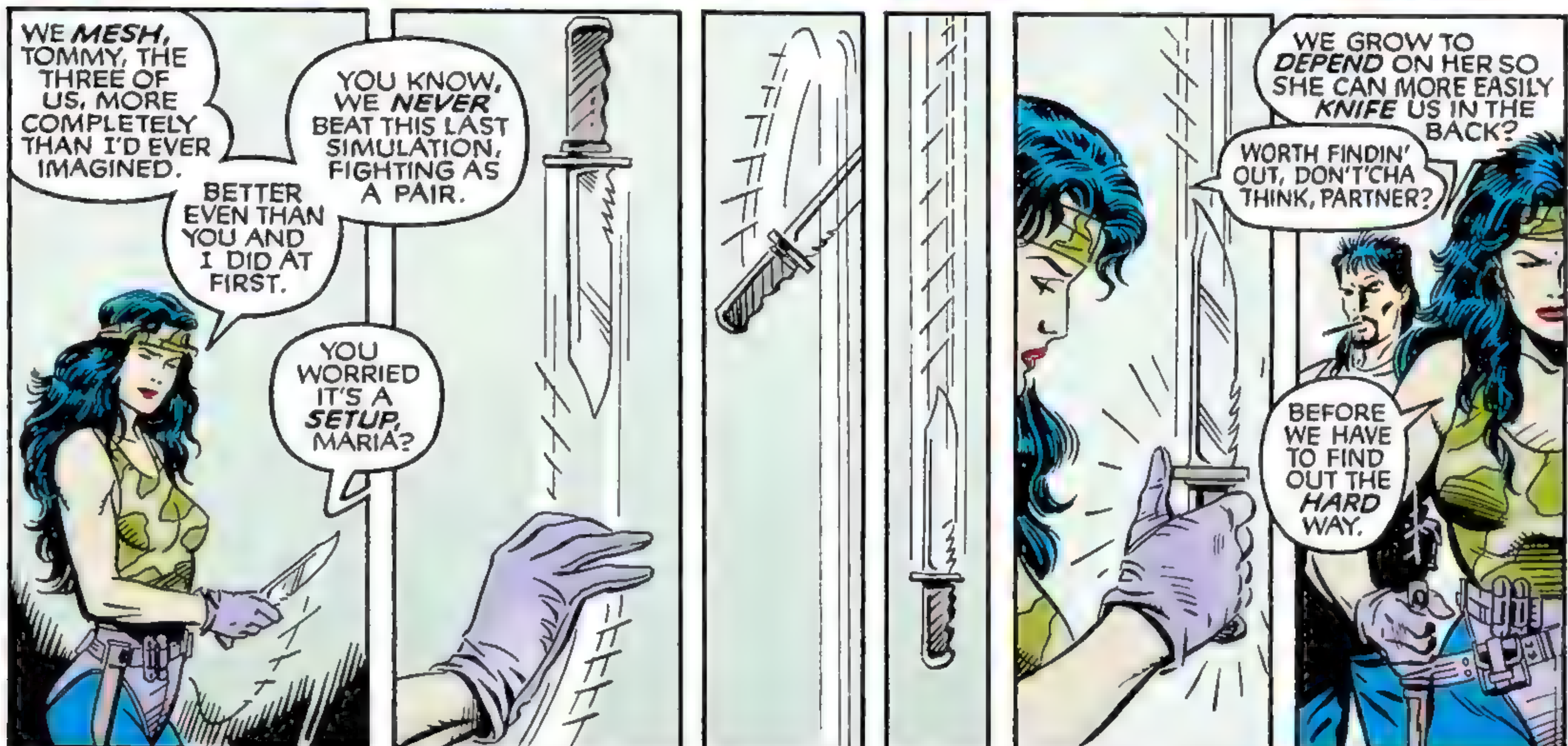
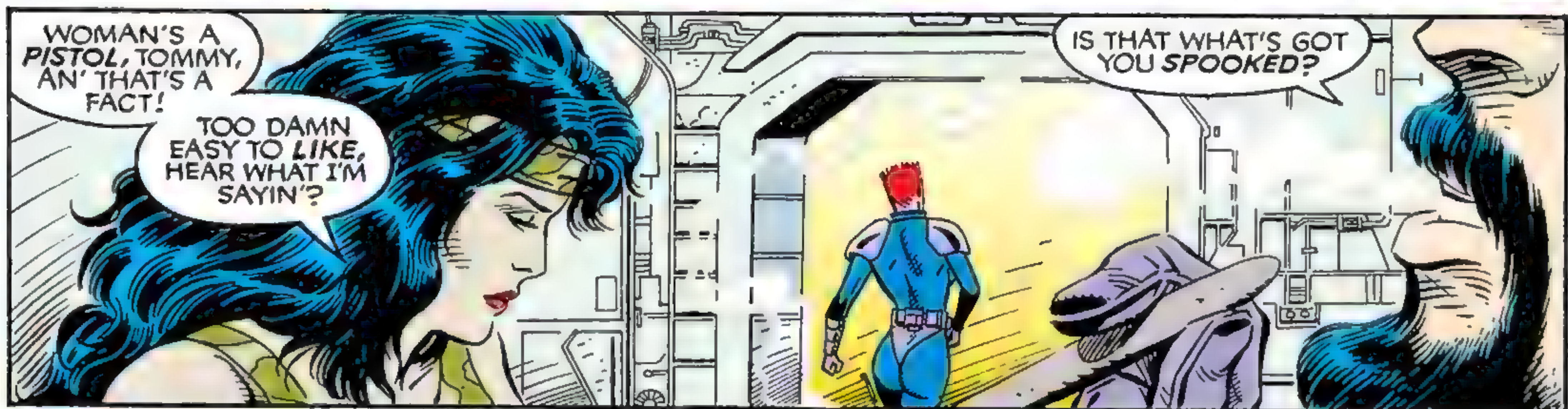


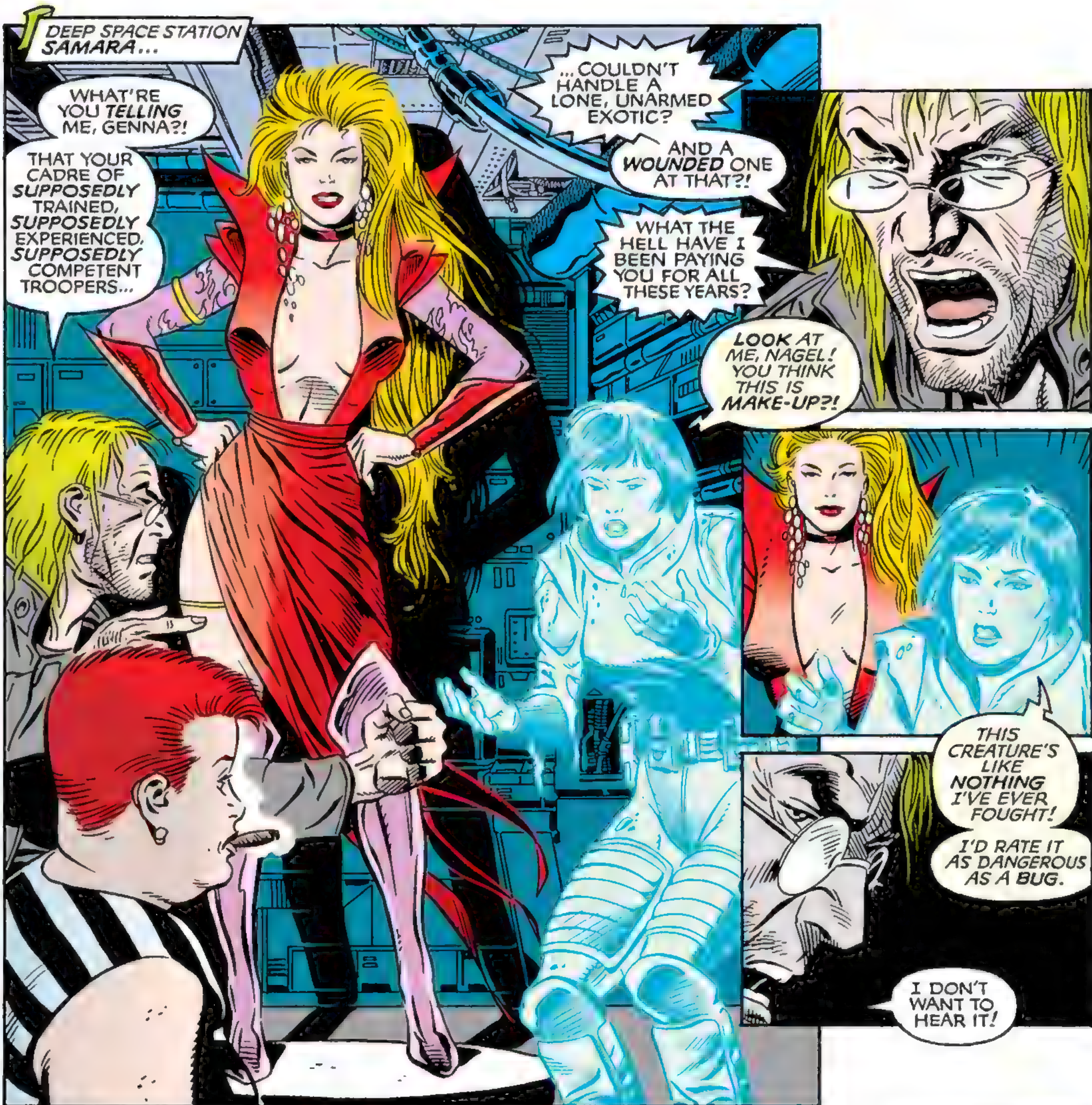












DEEP SPACE STATION
SAMARA...

WHAT'RE
YOU TELLING
ME, GENNA?!

THAT YOUR
CADRE OF
SUPPOSEDLY
TRAINED,
SUPPOSEDLY
EXPERIENCED,
SUPPOSEDLY
COMPETENT
TROOPERS...

...COULDN'T
HANDLE A
LONE, UNARMED
EXOTIC?

AND A
WOUNDED ONE
AT THAT?!

WHAT THE
HELL HAVE I
BEEN PAYING
YOU FOR ALL
THESE YEARS?

LOOK AT
ME, NAGEL!
YOU THINK
THIS IS
MAKE-UP?!

THIS
CREATURE'S
LIKE
NOTHING
I'VE EVER
FOUGHT!

I'D RATE IT
AS DANGEROUS
AS A BUG.

I DON'T
WANT TO
HEAR IT!



WHAT COMES NEXT, SWEET-
HEART--YOU WANT ME TO
BRING IN THE COLONIAL
MARINES?!

ACTUALLY,
YES!

WON'T THAT
PLEASE OUR
CORPORATE
EMPLOYERS!



MAY I REMIND YOU,
WOMAN, THAT THIS IS AN
ILLEGAL OPERATION.
YOU'RE HERE SO WE
WON'T NEED OUTSIDE
ASSISTANCE.

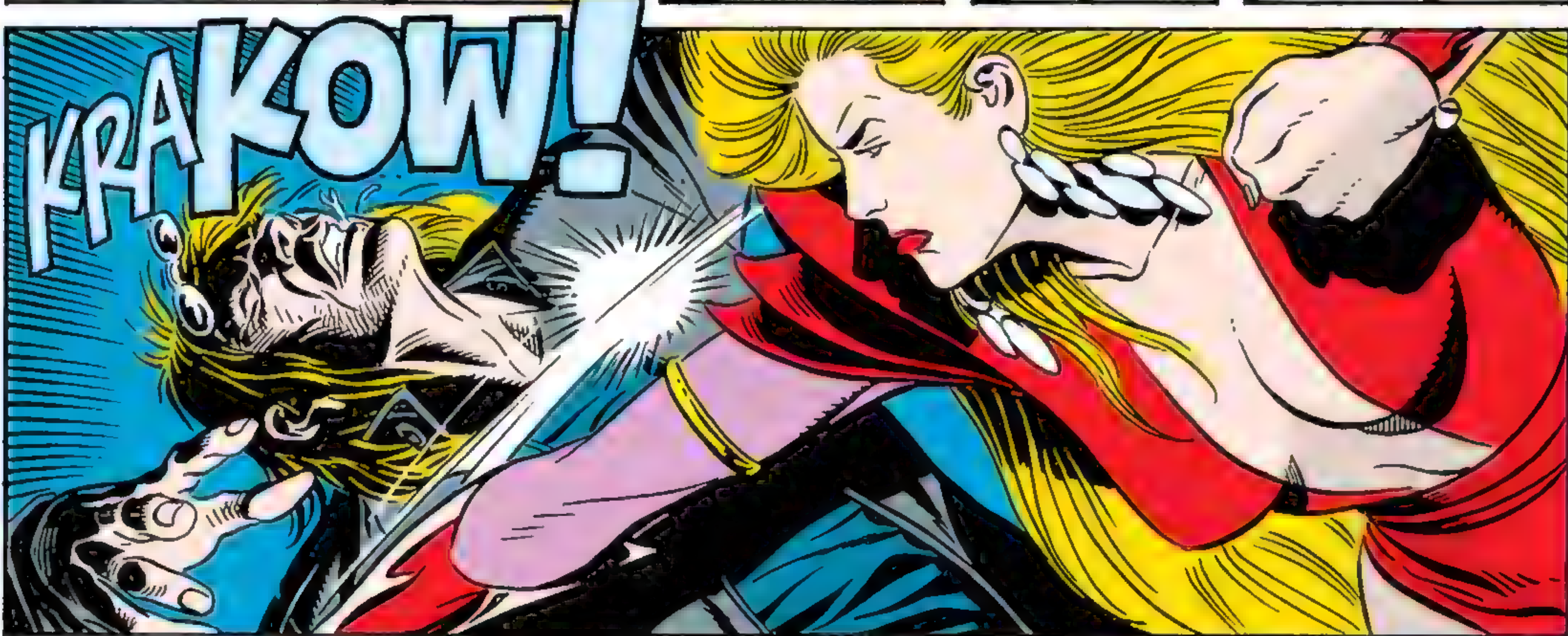


YOU'VE BEEN
WELL PAID FOR
YOUR EXPERTISE,
GENNA.

NOW
EARN
IT.

NO MORE
QUESTIONS,
NO MORE
EXCUSES.

I WANT
THE EXOTIC
FOUND.
I WANT IT
KILLED.



"WHAT'S
HAPPENED
TO HER?!"



I LOVE TO WALTZ.

I HATE IT.

THE ROMANCE
OF THE MUSIC, ITS
SHEER ELEGANCE,
SWEEPS ME AWAY.

I PREFER A PASSION
THAT MAKES YOU SWEAT.
THE PIPES AND THE BODHRAN,
CASCADING THROUGH AN
IRISH REEL. OR BETTER YET,
A KILLER BASS GUITAR
PLAYING CLASSIC BAR-BAND
ROCKABILLY.

TOYLAND

IN THE ARMS OF MY
LOVE, UNDER THE
SPELL OF THIS MUSIC,
I'M A LADY.

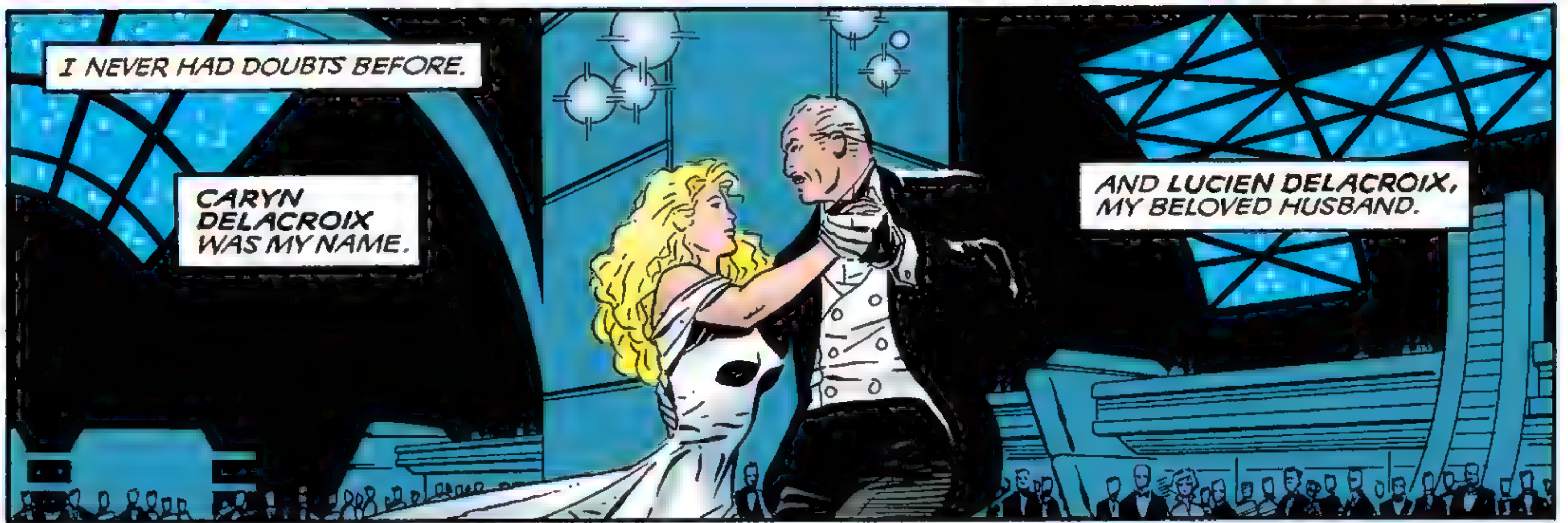
IT'S ROUGH
AND LOUD AND
MESSY, AND
WHEN THE
DANCE IS
DONE, I HURT
LIKE HELL, AND
I'VE NEVER
FELT SO
WONDERFULLY
ALIVE!

SO MANY IMAGES...

SO MANY FEELINGS...

ARE ALL OF THEM
TRUE?

OR NONE?



I NEVER HAD DOUBTS BEFORE.

CARYN
DELACROIX
WAS MY NAME.

AND LUCIEN DELACROIX,
MY BELOVED HUSBAND.



I'M A TROPHY...

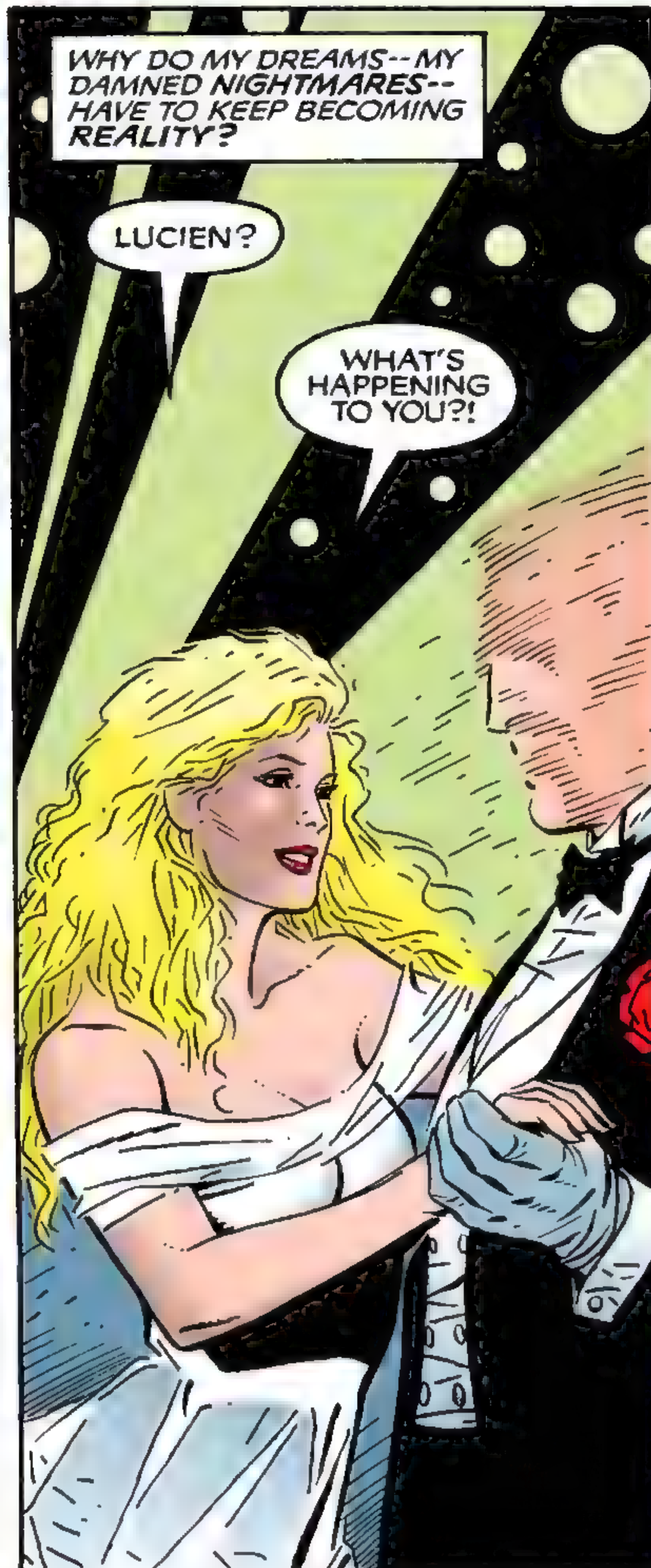
... GENETICALLY
ENGINEERED
TO BE THE
FULFILLMENT
OF MY SPOUSE'S
DREAMS.



I'M PERFECT.

WHY CAN'T I
BE HAPPY
WITH THAT
ANYMORE?

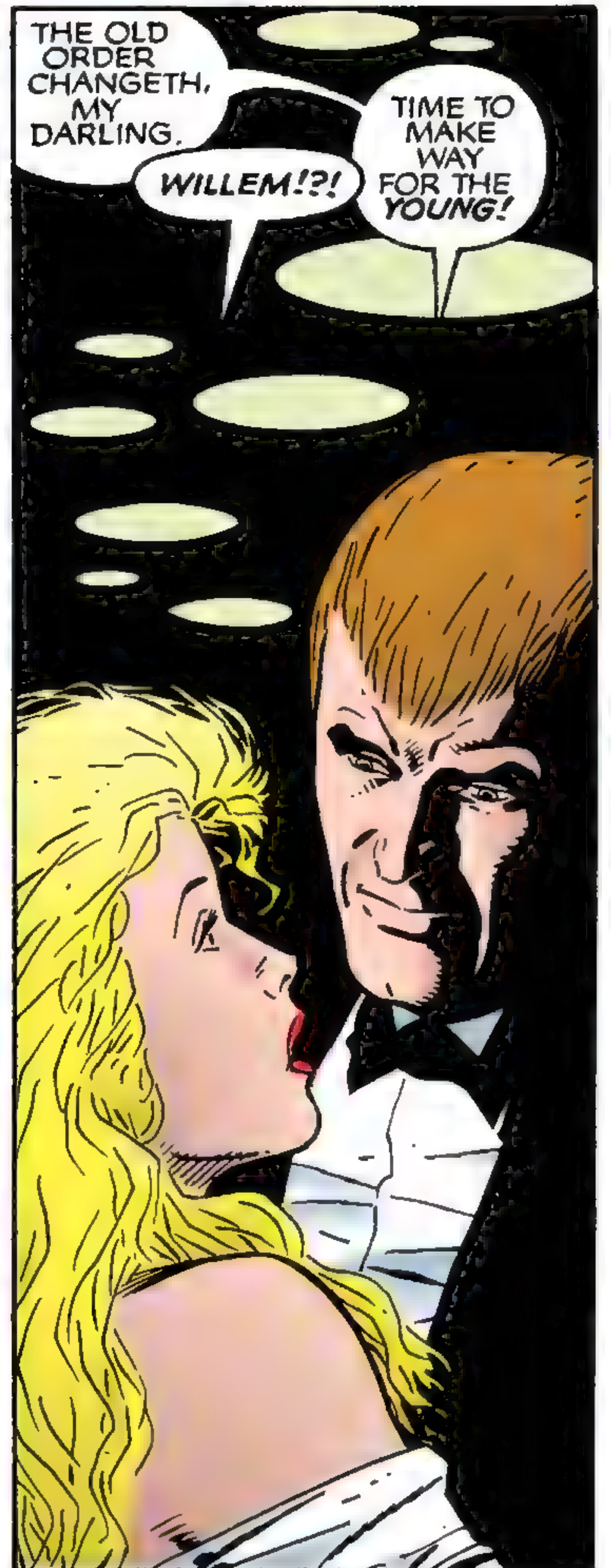
WHY CAN'T
REALITY STAY
THE DREAM IT
WAS ALWAYS
MEANT TO BE?



WHY DO MY DREAMS-- MY
DAMNED NIGHTMARES--
HAVE TO KEEP BECOMING
REALITY?

LUCIEN?

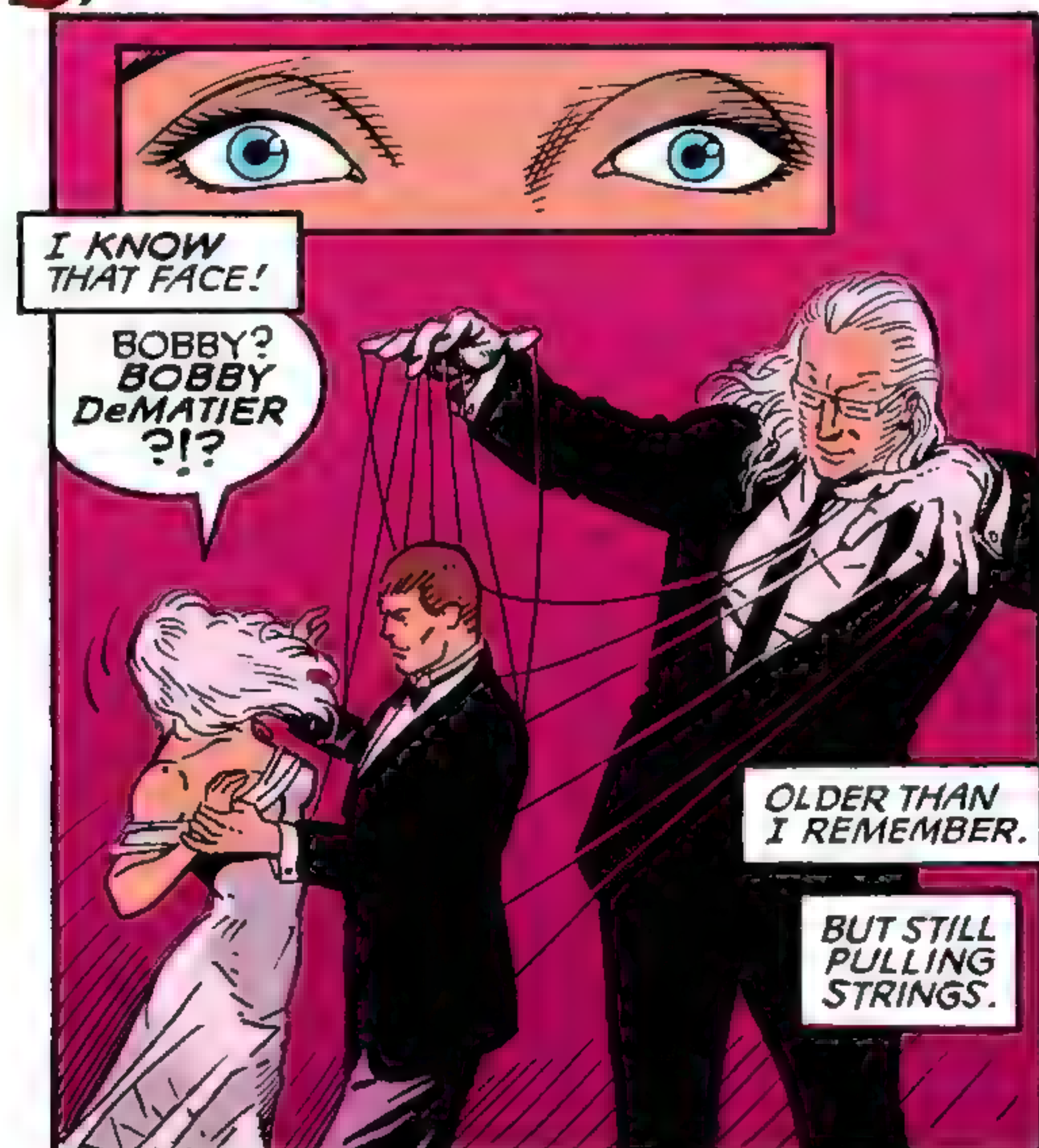
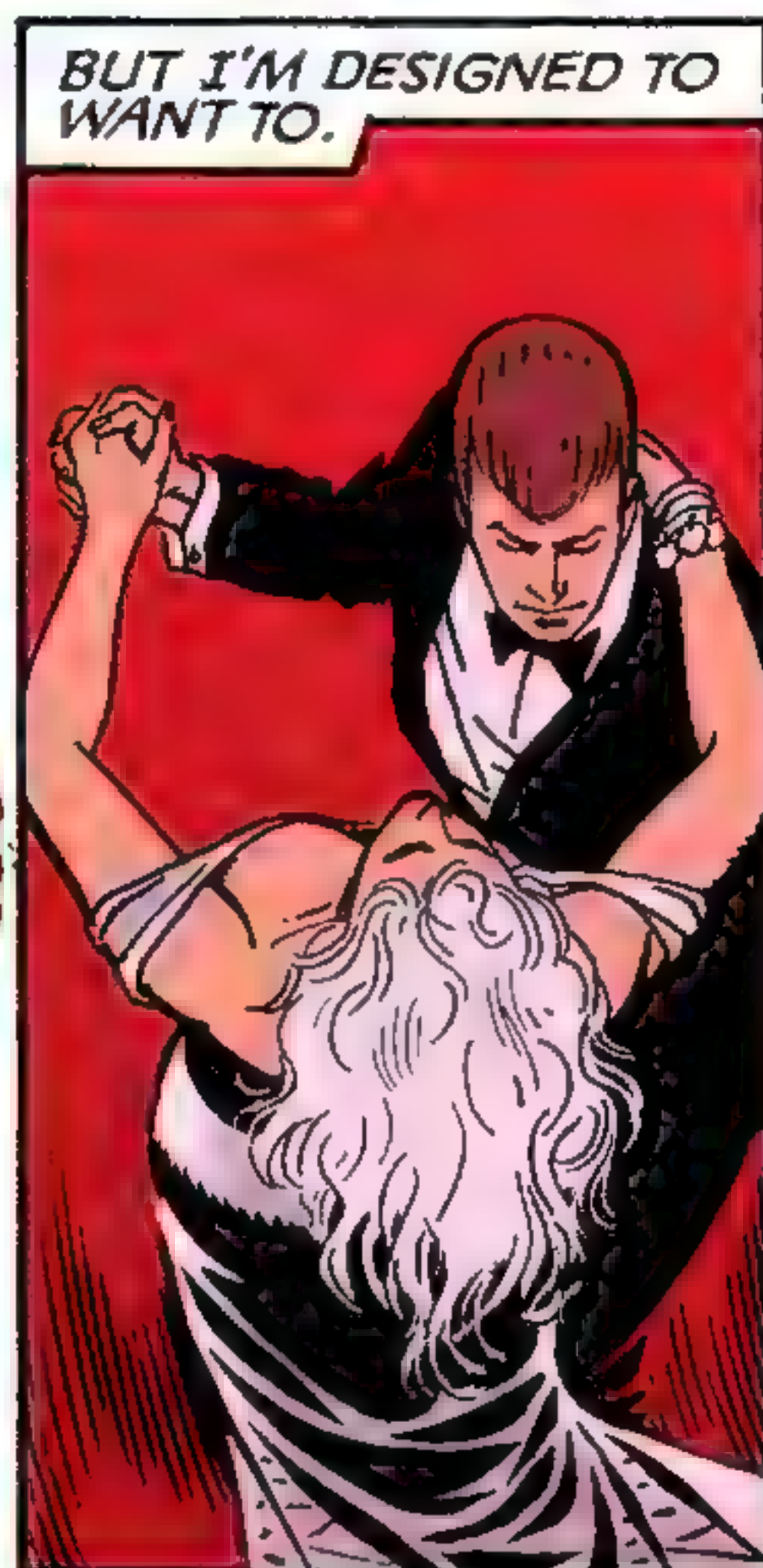
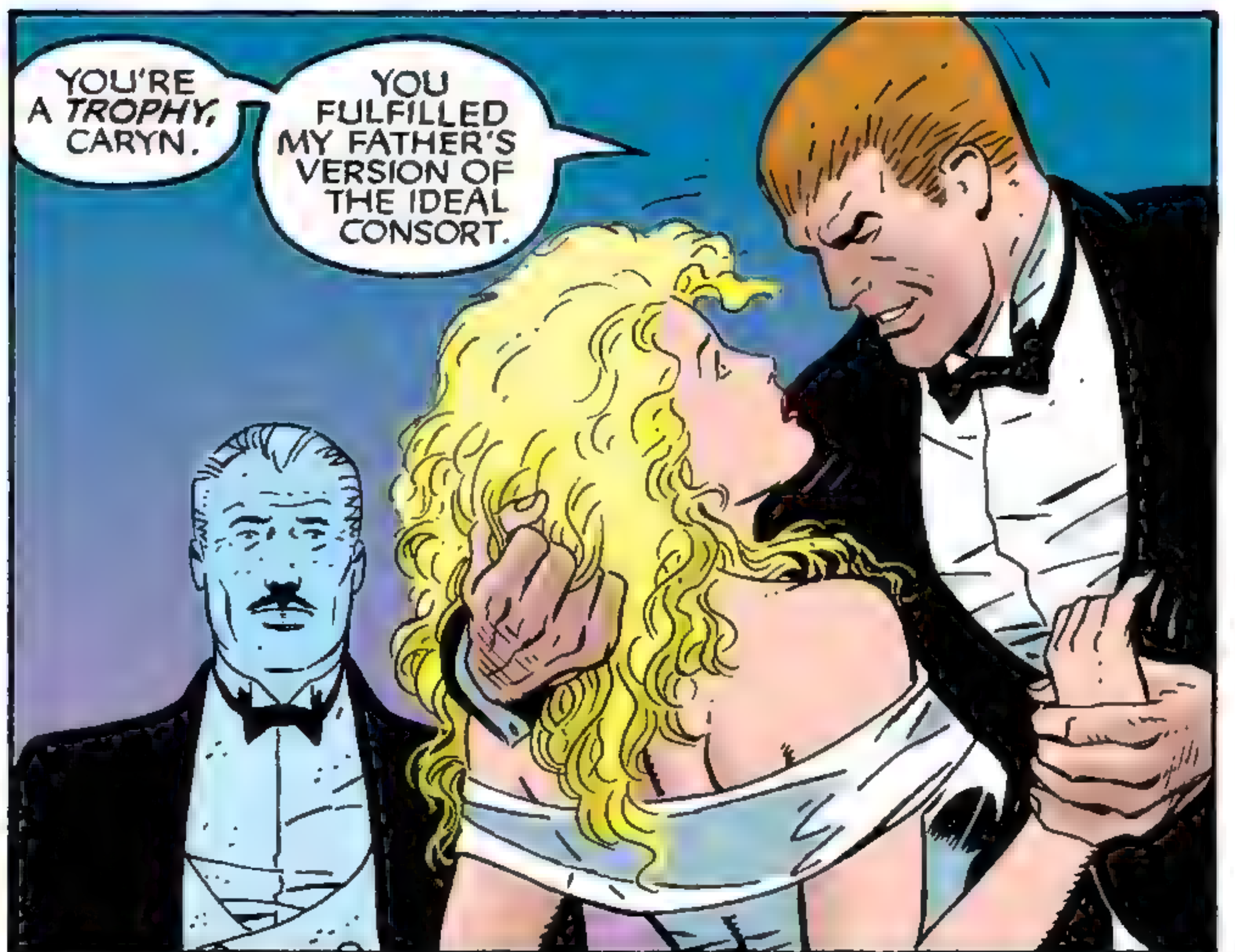
WHAT'S
HAPPENING
TO YOU?!



THE OLD
ORDER
CHANGETH,
MY
DARLING.

WILLEM!?!

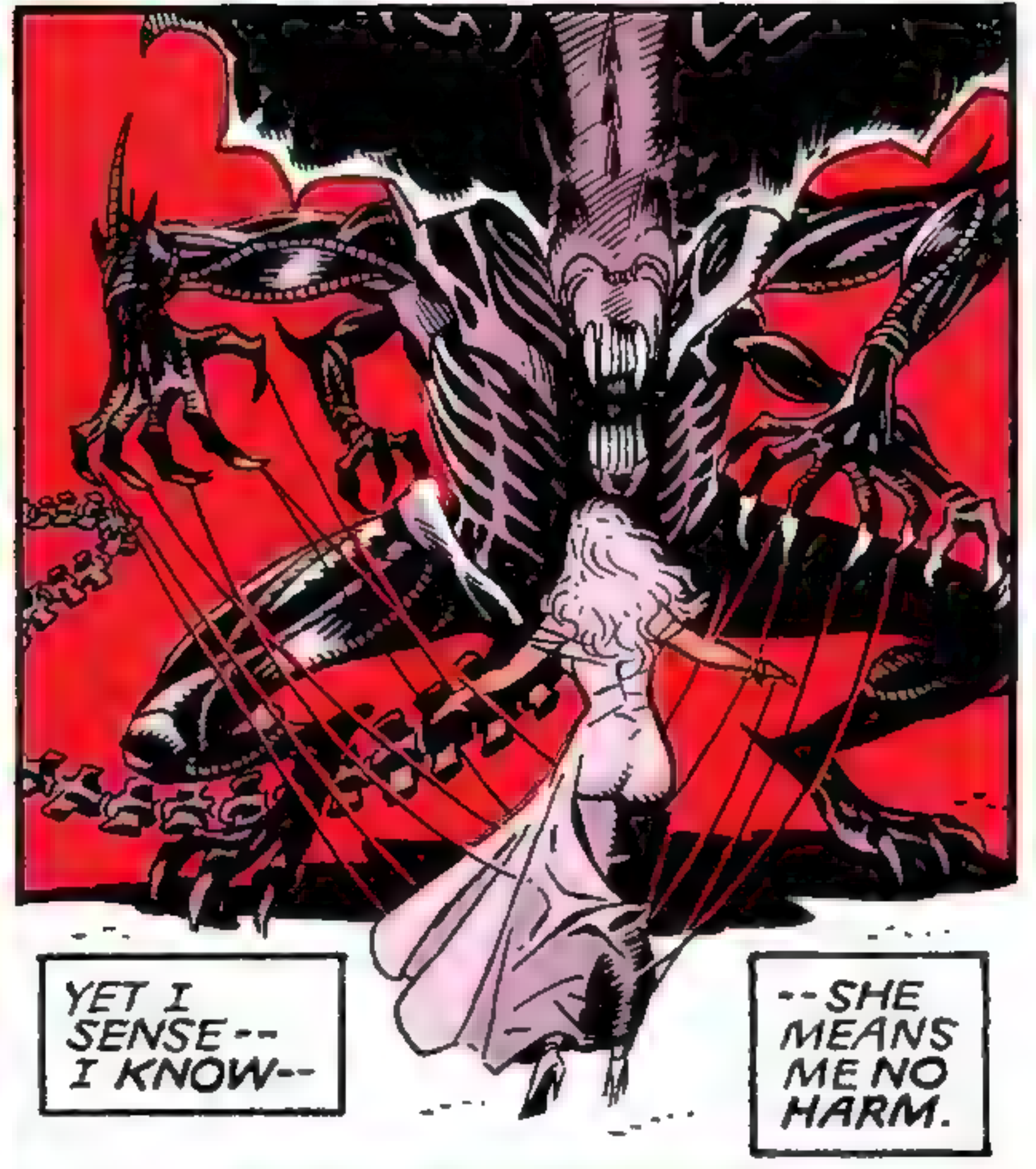
TIME TO
MAKE
WAY
FOR THE
YOUNG!





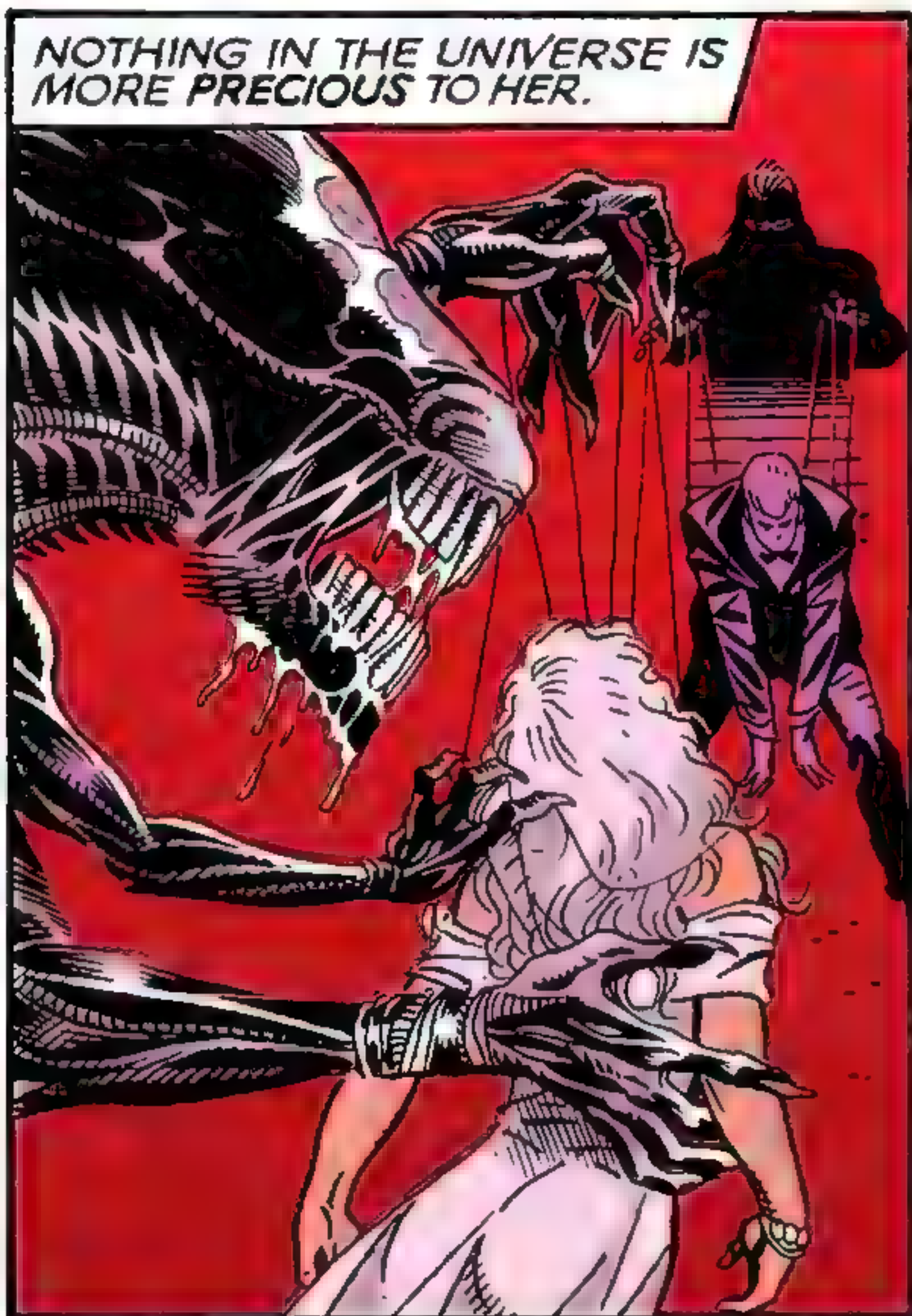
I SHOULD BE AFRAID.

HUMANITY HAS NO MORE DEADLY FOE THAN AN ALIEN MOTHER QUEEN.

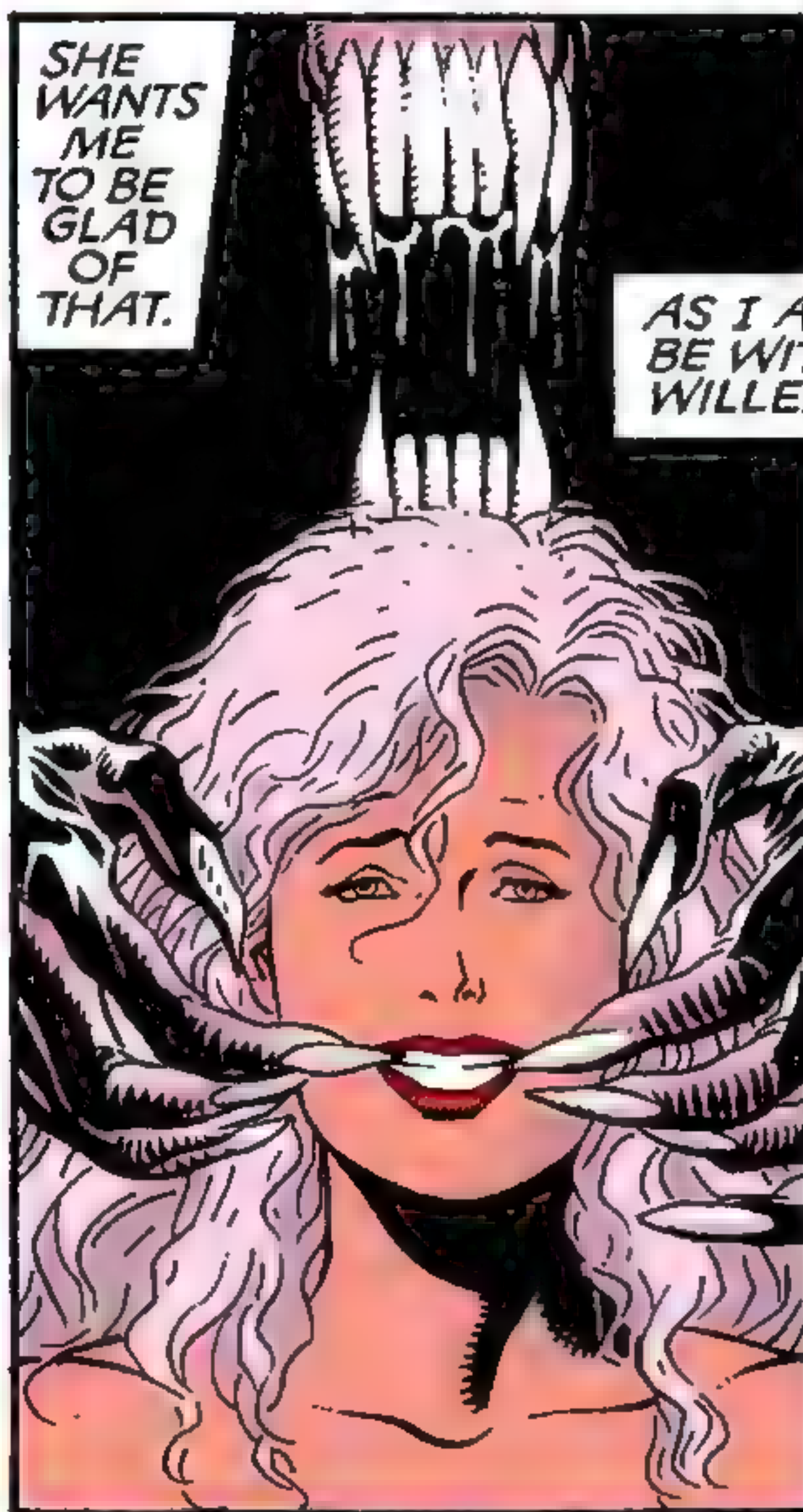


YET I SENSE-- I KNOW--

--SHE MEANS ME NO HARM.



NOTHING IN THE UNIVERSE IS MORE PRECIOUS TO HER.



SHE WANTS ME TO BE GLAD OF THAT.

AS I AM TO BE WITH WILLEM.



WE ARE MADE FOR EACH OTHER.



ALL I CAN THINK OF, THOUGH, AS OUR DANCE ONCE MORE BEGINS...

... IS HOW MUCH I WANT HIM DEAD.

ARRRGH!

I SUPPOSE I SHOULD HAVE REMEMBERED THE OLD SAYING...

...TO BE CAREFUL
WHAT YOU WISH FOR.

ALIENS ARE
EMBRYOS
WHEN THEY
HATCH FROM
THEIR HUMAN
HOST.

THIS
MONSTROSITY
EMERGES
FULLY
GROWN.

IT COMES
CLOAKED
IN ITS OWN
SHADOW.
ALL I CAN
SEE OF IT
ARE RANDOM
PIECES...

...BUT THEY CONJURE
AN IMAGE TOO AWFUL
TO BE ENDURED.

I'M GRATEFUL THEN
FOR THE STABBING
PAIN BENEATH MY
OWN BREAST, THE
BURSTING OF MY HEART.

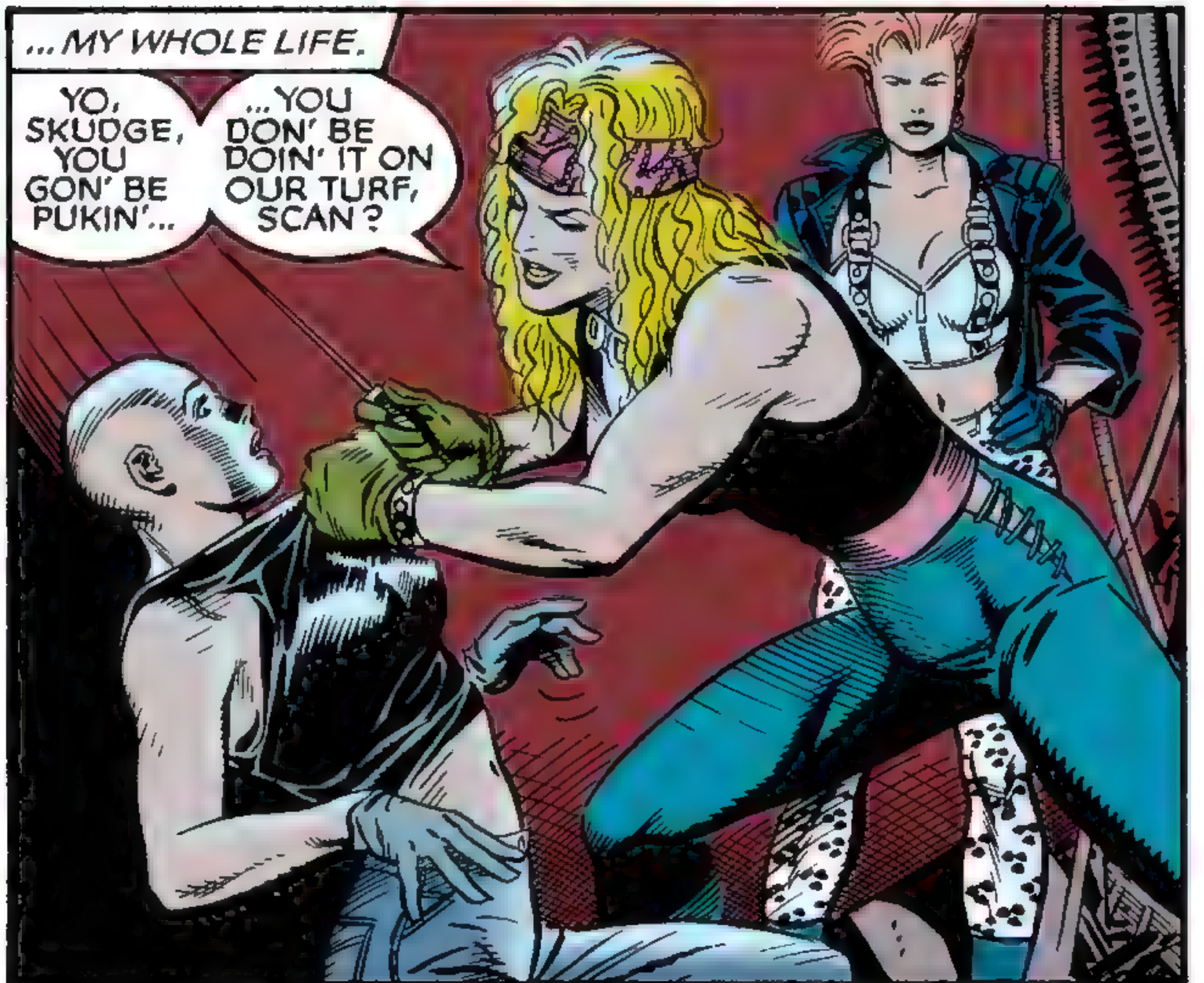
IF THIS IS THE SHAPE
OF THINGS TO COME, I
WANT NO PART OF IT.

AND YET,
THERE'S A
RAGE IN ME
AS WELL, HOT
AS A BURNING
STAR...

... THAT I'M DYING
WITHOUT A FIGHT.



I'VE ALWAYS FOUGHT...



... MY WHOLE LIFE.

YO, SKUDGE, YOU GON' BE PUKIN'...

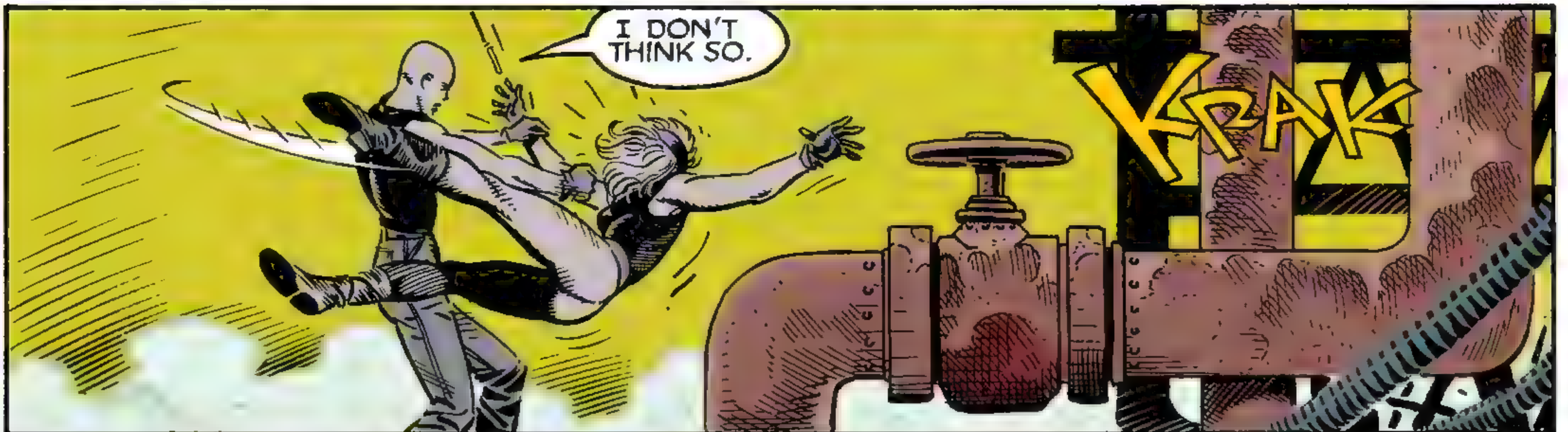
... YOU DON' BE DOIN' IT ON OUR TURF, SCAN?



MAYBE I MARK YOU...

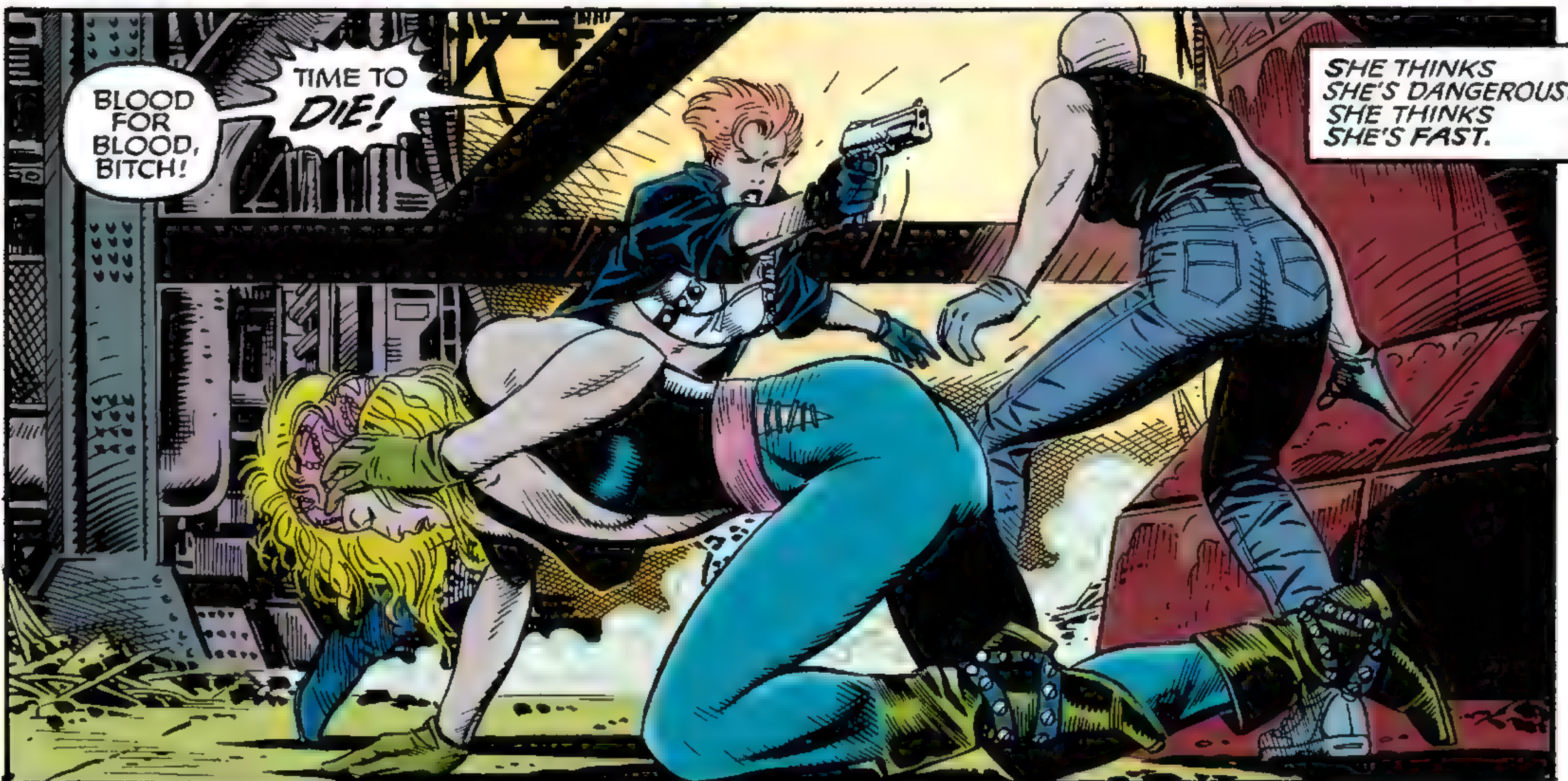
... TAKE AWAY AN EYE...

... TEACH YOU SOME RESPECT, HEY?



I DON'T THINK SO.

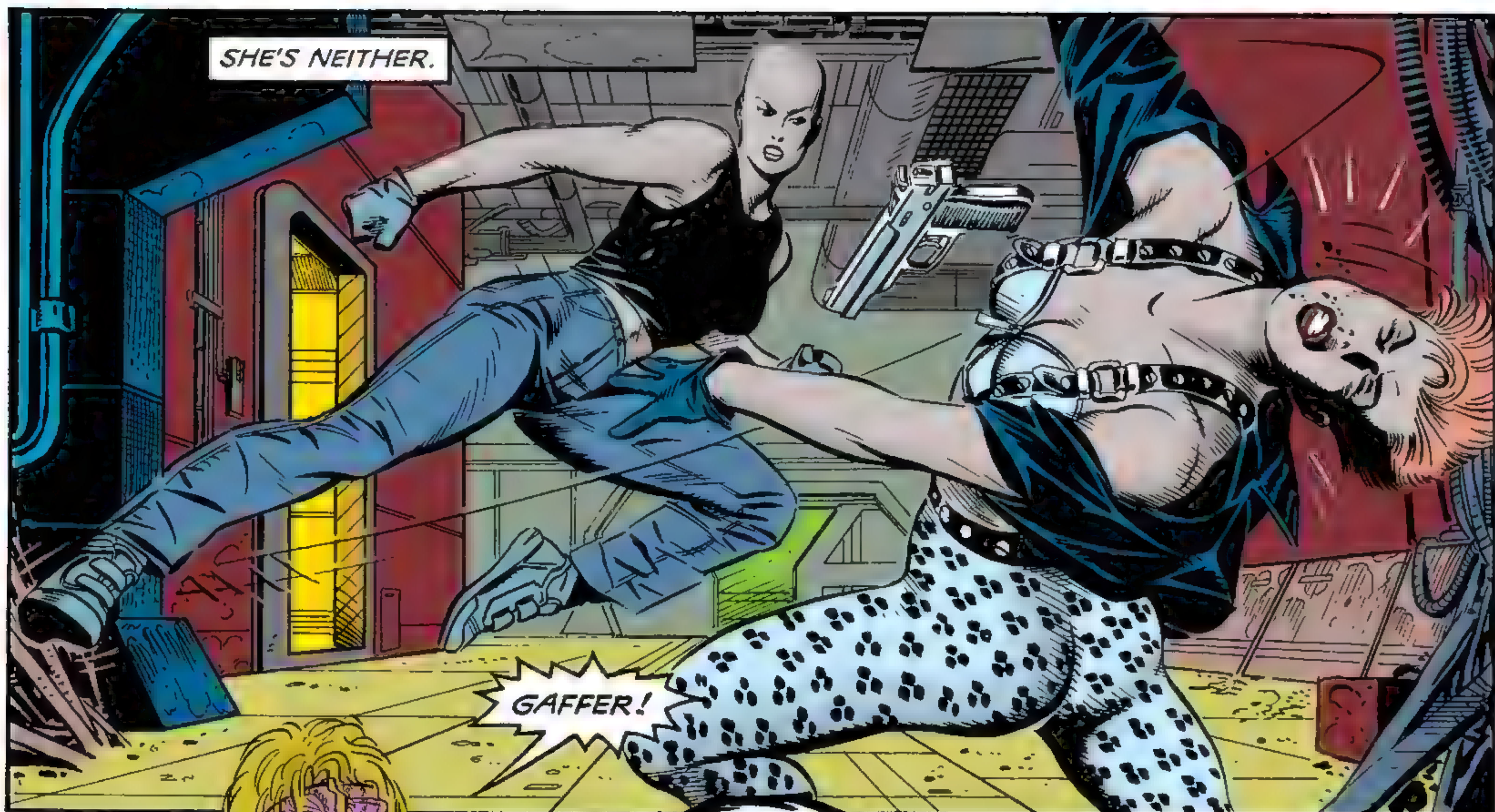
KRAK



BLOOD FOR BLOOD, BITCH!

TIME TO DIE!

SHE THINKS SHE'S DANGEROUS. SHE THINKS SHE'S FAST.



SHE'S NEITHER.

GAFFER!

DAMN YOU
DAMN YOU
DAMN
Y--



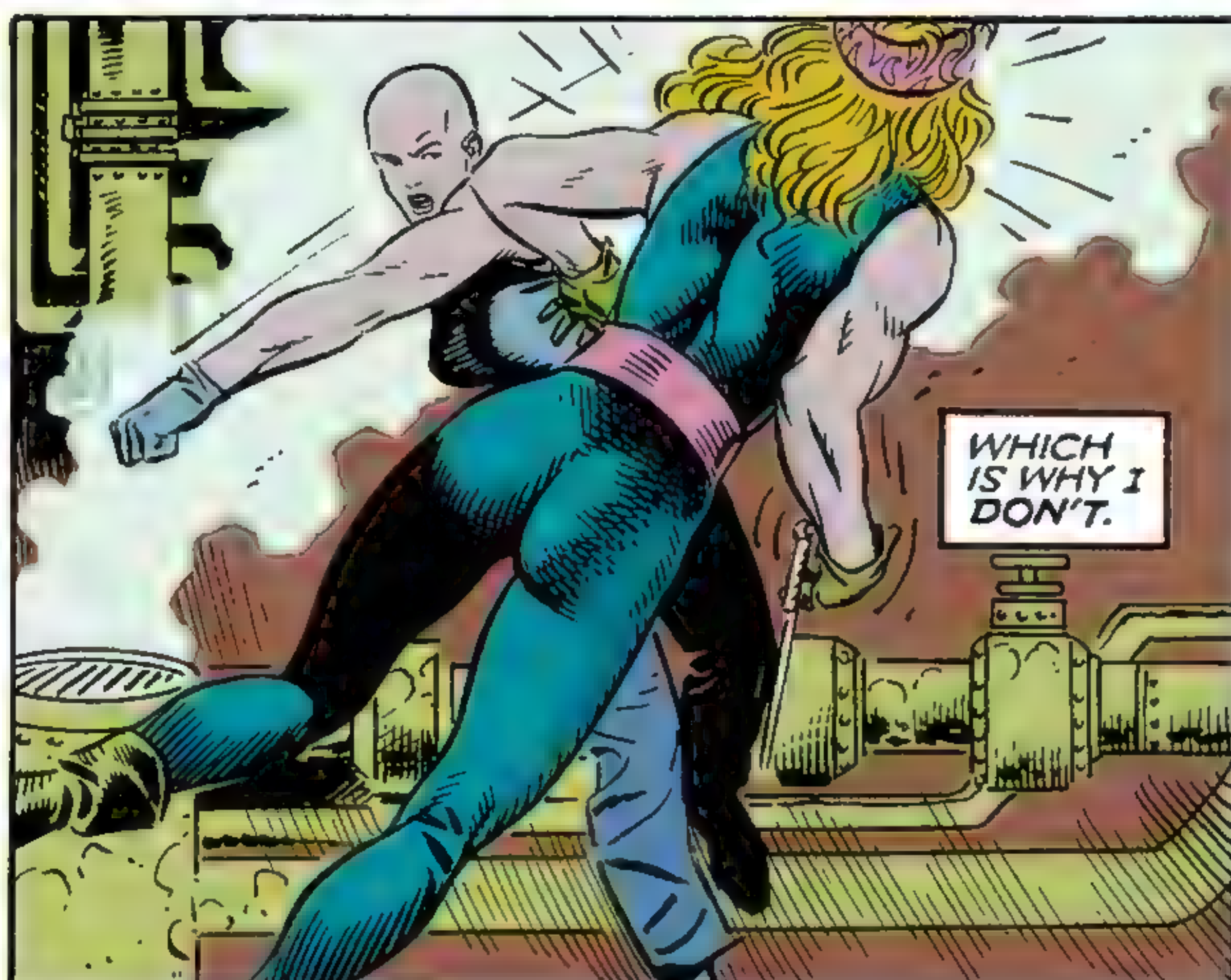
DO YOU
REALLY
THINK
THAT'S
WISE?



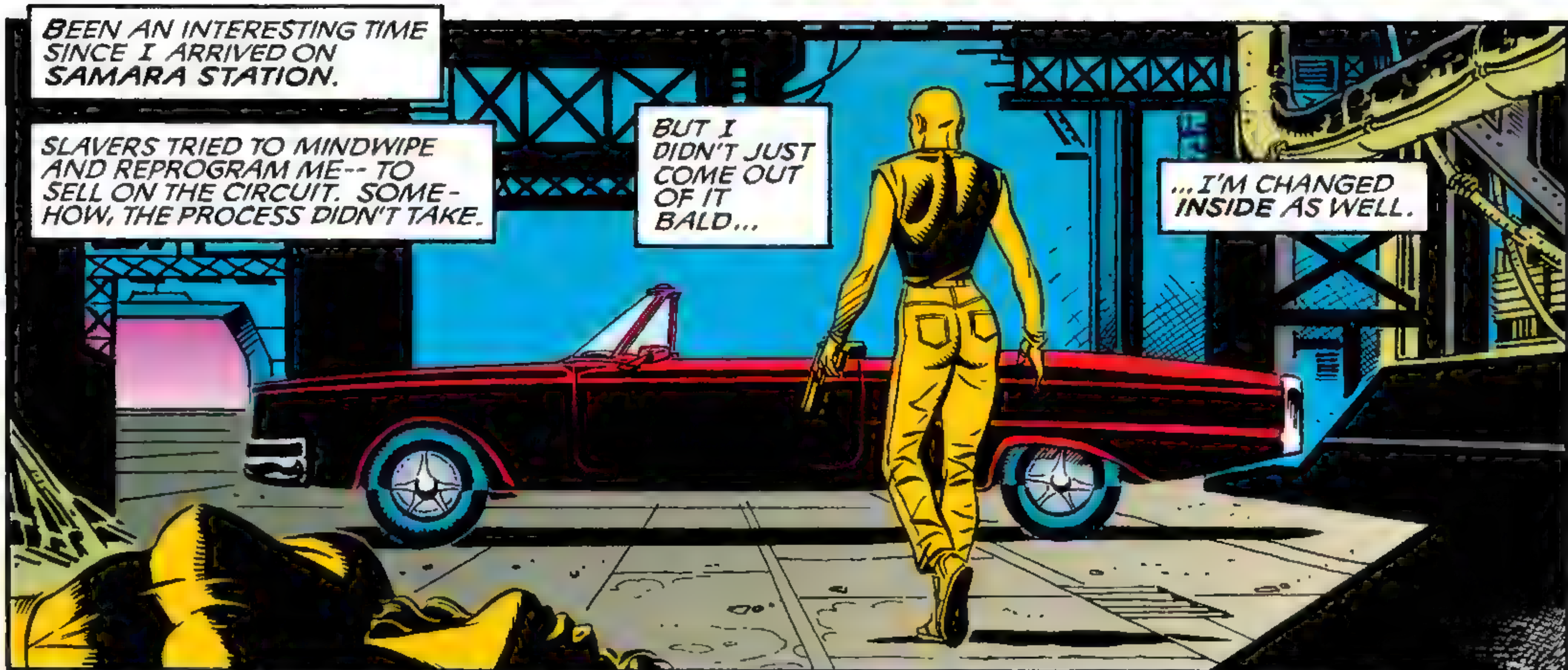
SO EASY
TO KILL.

WE BOTH
KNOW IT.

IT WOULD
MEAN
NOTHING
TO ME TO
PULL THE
TRIGGER.



WHICH
IS WHY I
DON'T.



BEEN AN INTERESTING TIME SINCE I ARRIVED ON SAMARA STATION.

SLAVERS TRIED TO MINDWIPE AND REPROGRAM ME-- TO SELL ON THE CIRCUIT. SOMEHOW, THE PROCESS DIDN'T TAKE.

BUT I DIDN'T JUST COME OUT OF IT BALD...

...I'M CHANGED INSIDE AS WELL.



LIKE THE CAR. VINTAGE 1968 T-BIRD.

MY OWN PREFERENCE IS A '64 MUSTANG.



STRANGE, THOUGH, I THOUGHT A MUSTANG WAS A WILD HORSE, LONG EXTINCT.

THAT'S THE OTHER CHANGE.



THERE'S A WHOLE LIFETIME HATCHING INSIDE MY SKULL, LIKE AN ALIEN BENEATH MY HEART.

ALL OF IT BRAND NEW...



... ALL OF IT MINE.

ALL AS DEADLY TO ME AS THE PHYSICAL EMBRYO WOULD BE.

SCREW THIS!

DAMN QUESTIONS CAN WAIT.

BIG MAMA'S IN TROUBLE.

WE'VE COME TOO FAR, I OWE HER TOO MUCH, TO LOSE HER NOW.

THE SKYLINER
LIBERTÉ...

MR. ...
ROBESON,
IS IT?

ONE OF
GISANDE
SALAZAR'S
SENIOR
SECURITY
STAFF?

FORGIVE THE
INTERRUPTION,
M'SIEU
DELACROIX.

... CORPORATE
HEADQUARTERS
OF MONTCALM-
DELACROIX et CIE...

... IN STRATO-
SPHERIC CRUISE
ABOVE THE
PACIFIC RIM.



I KNOW
THIS IS A
BAD TIME
FOR YOU,
WHAT WITH
MADAME
BEING
MISSING
AND ALL.

I ASSUME
YOU WOULD
NOT HAVE
REQUESTED AN
APPOINTMENT
IF THE NEED
WERE NOT
URGENT.

NORMALLY, SEIGNEUR,
THIS WOULD GO THROUGH
PROPER CHANNELS, TO
MS. SALAZAR, BUT
SHE'S GONE AS
WELL.

I QUITE
UNDER-
STAND.

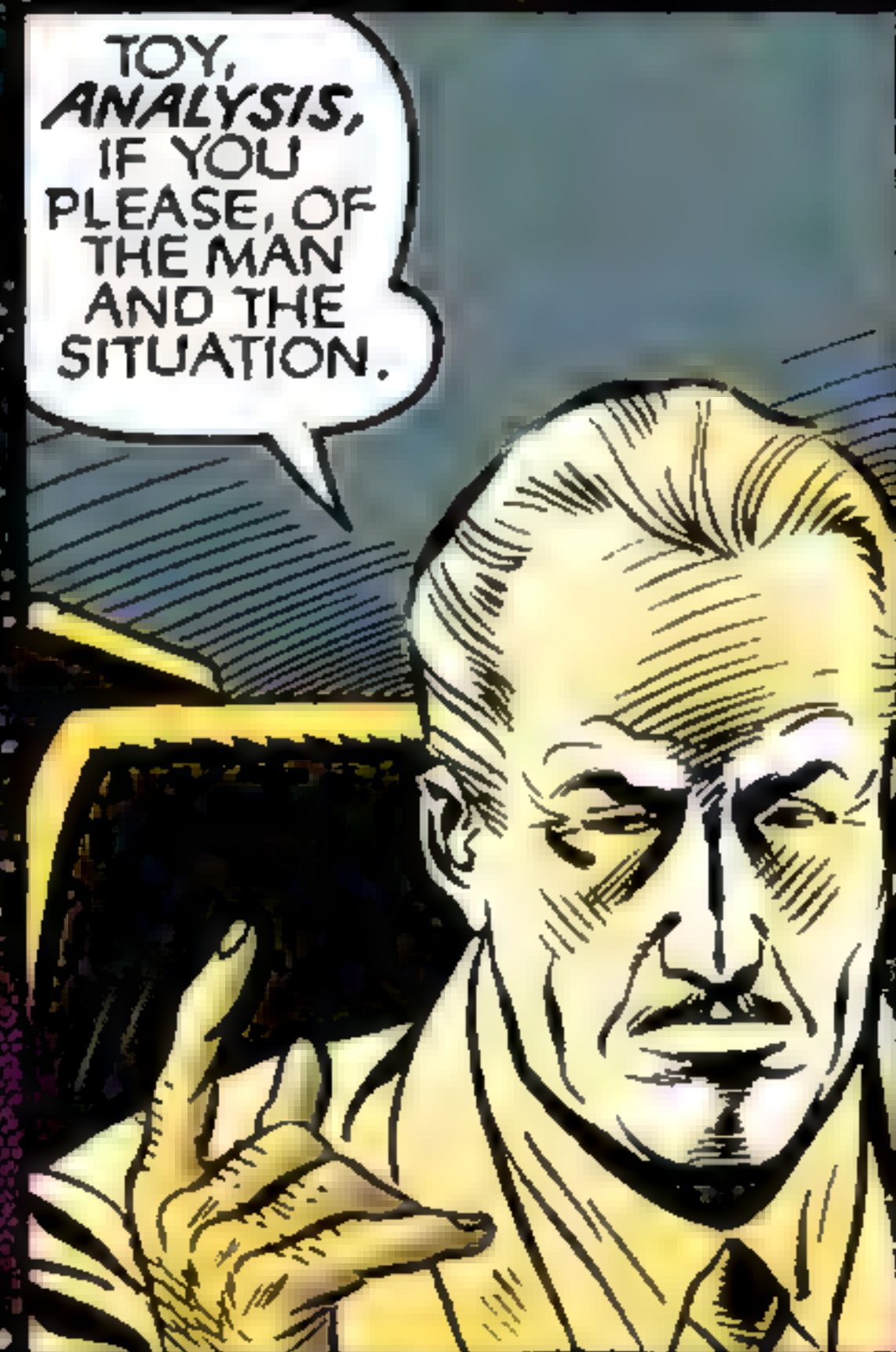


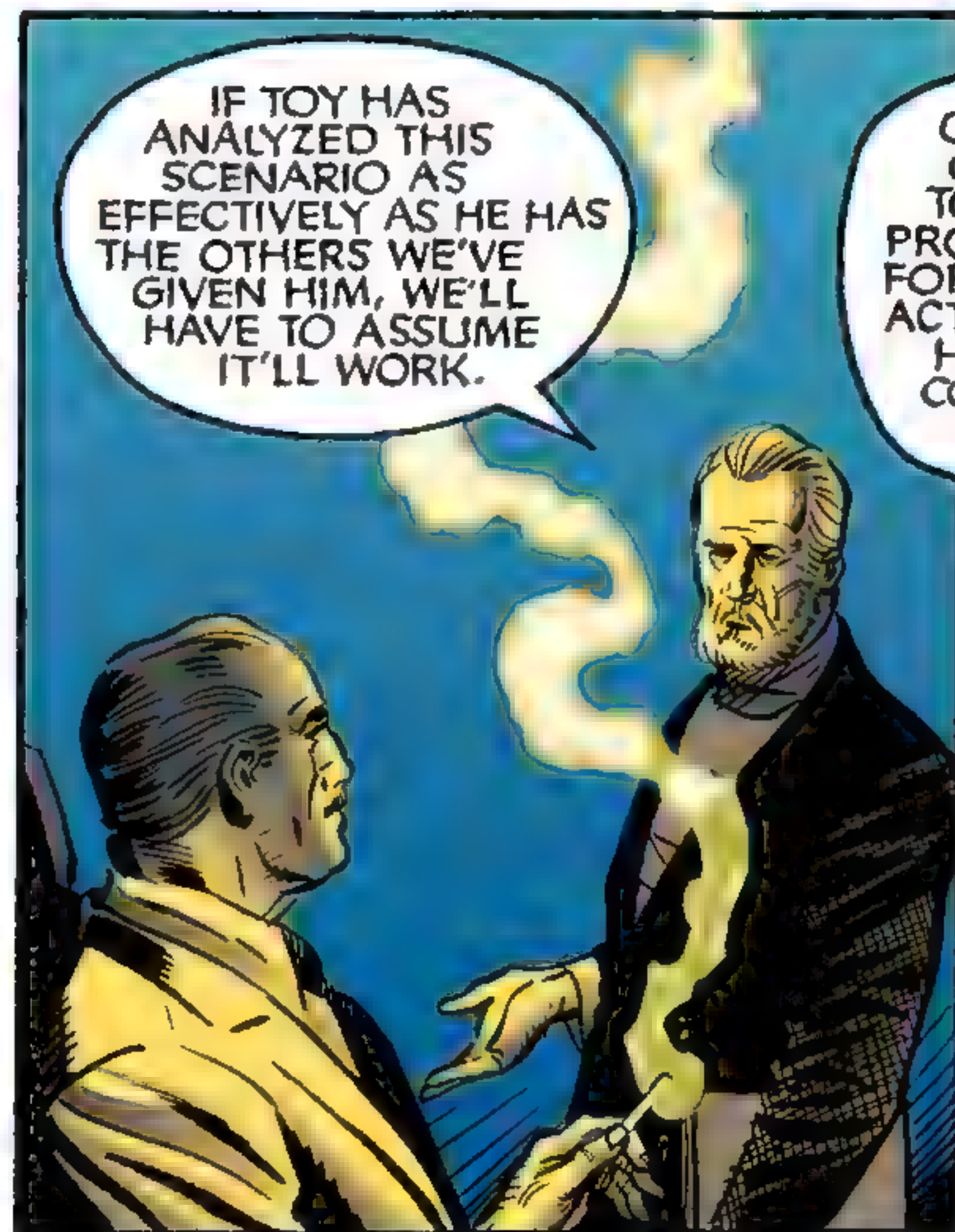
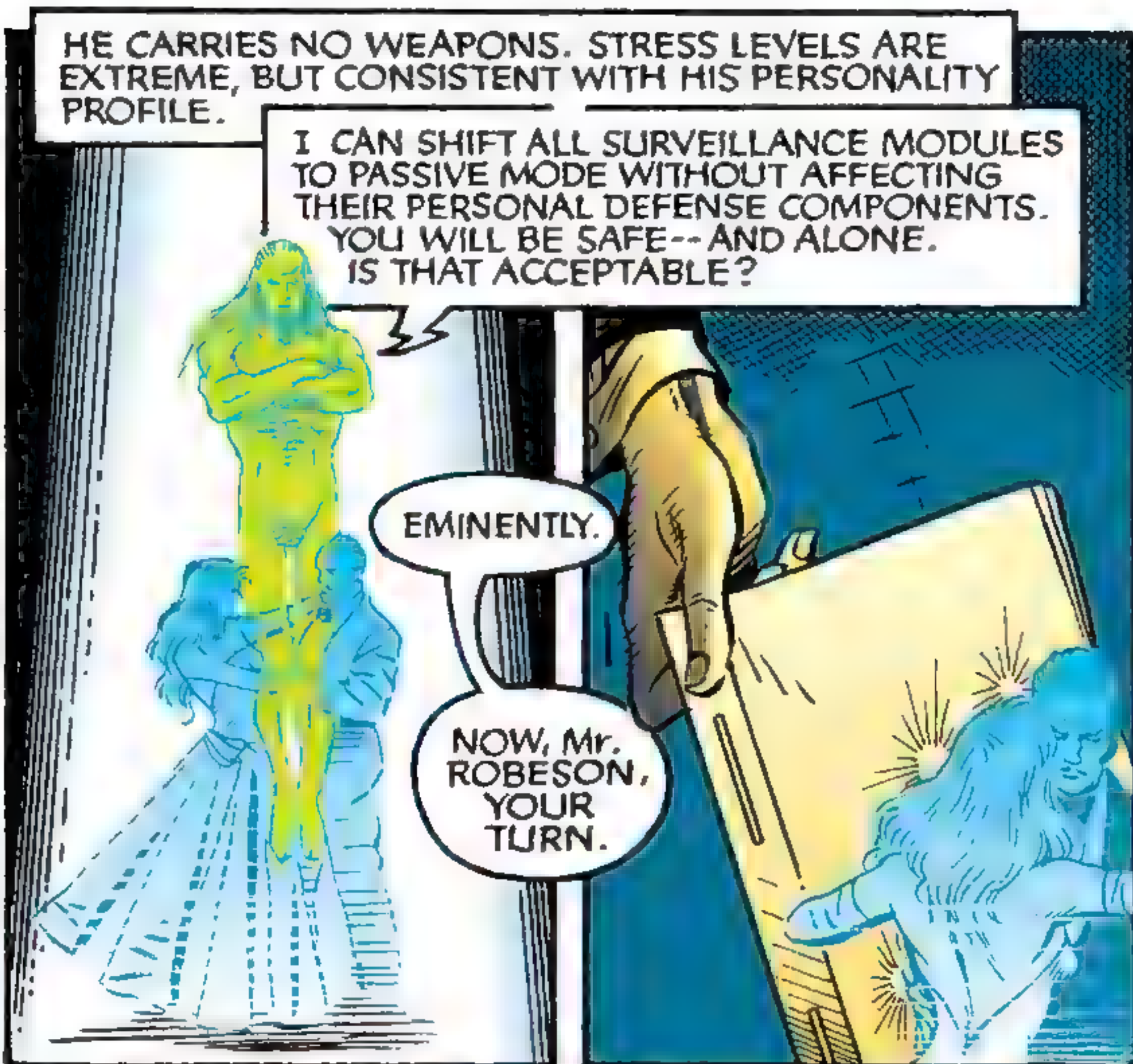
PLEASE, MAY
WE HAVE A
**PRIVACY
SHIELD?**

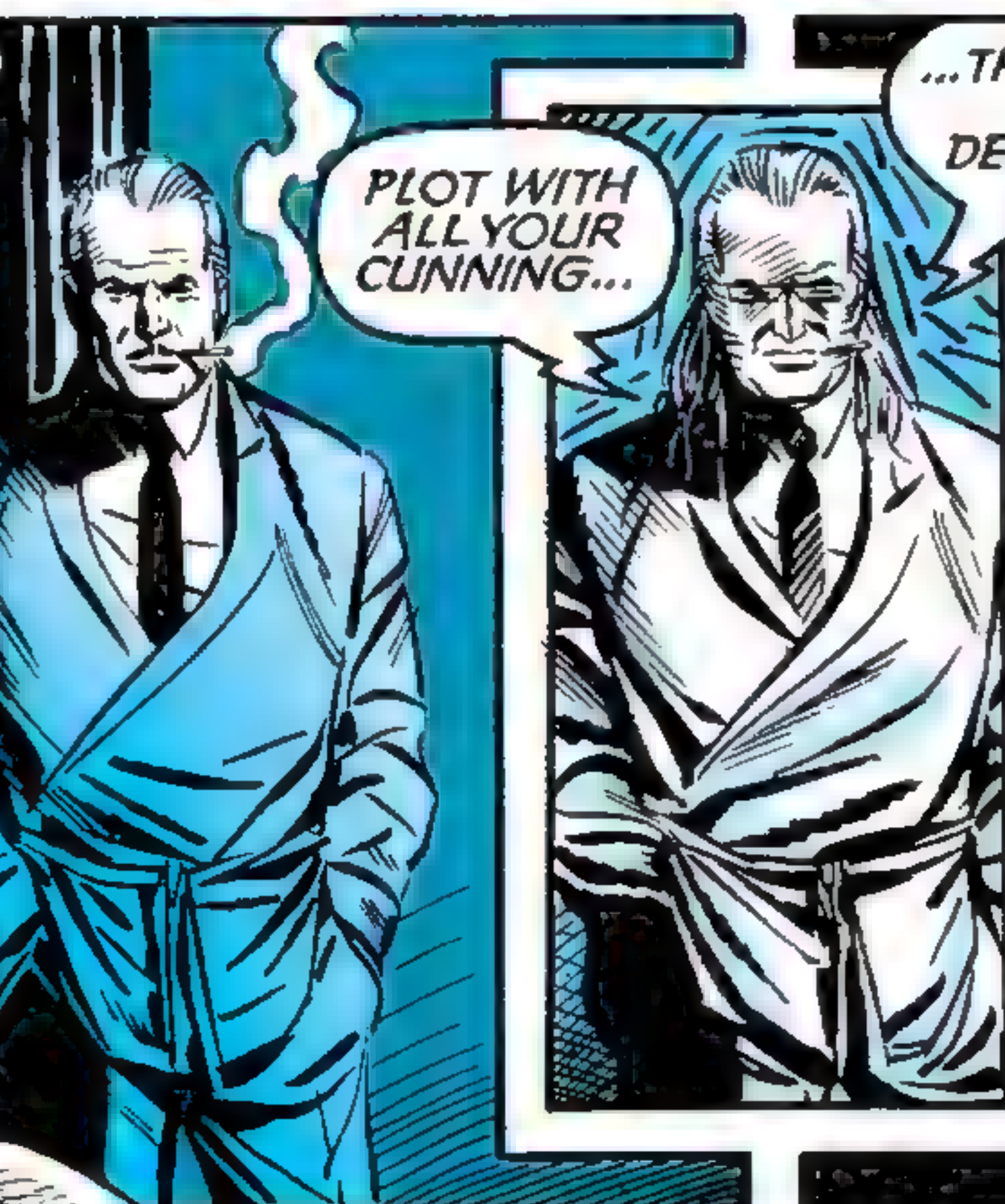
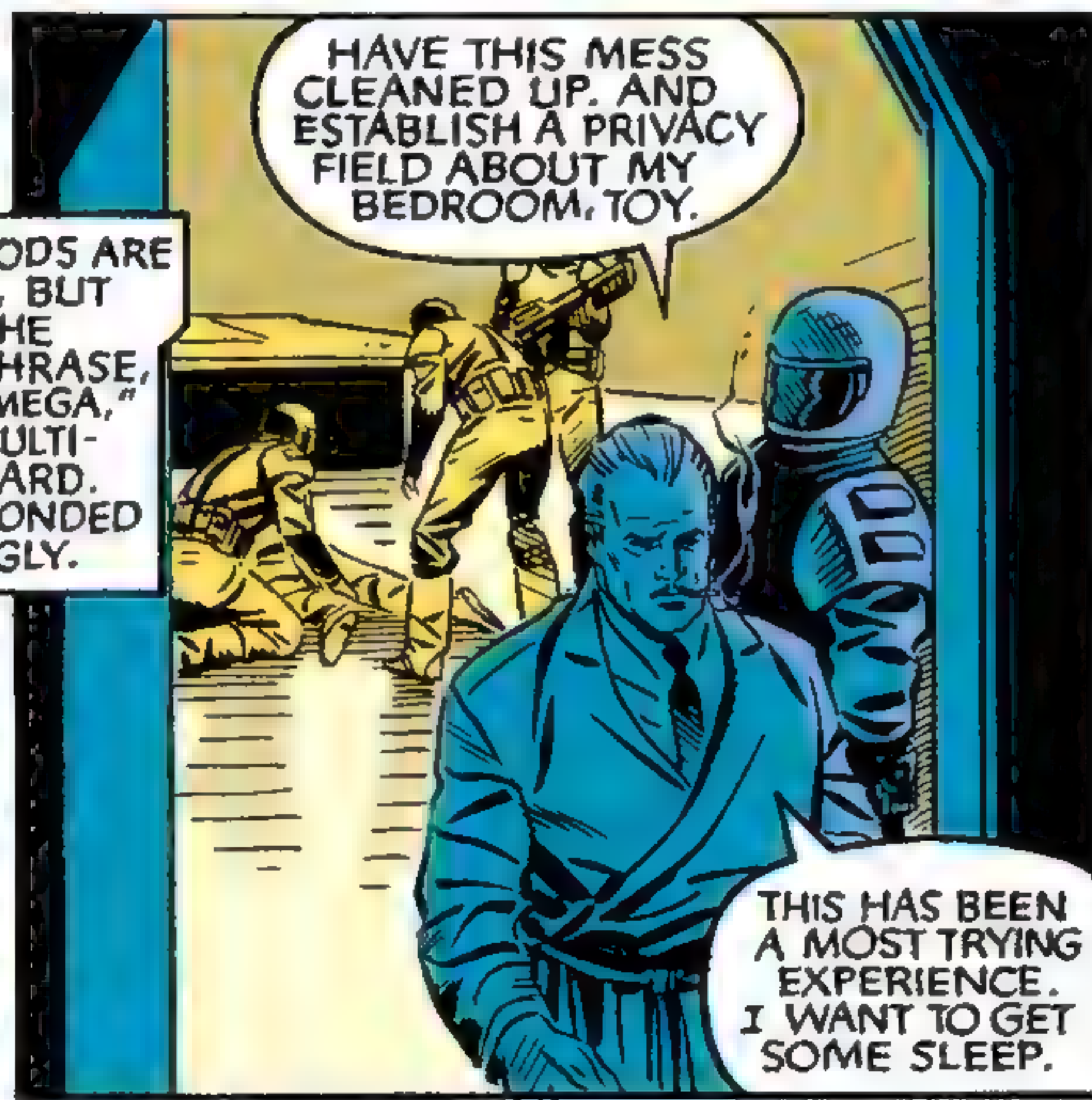
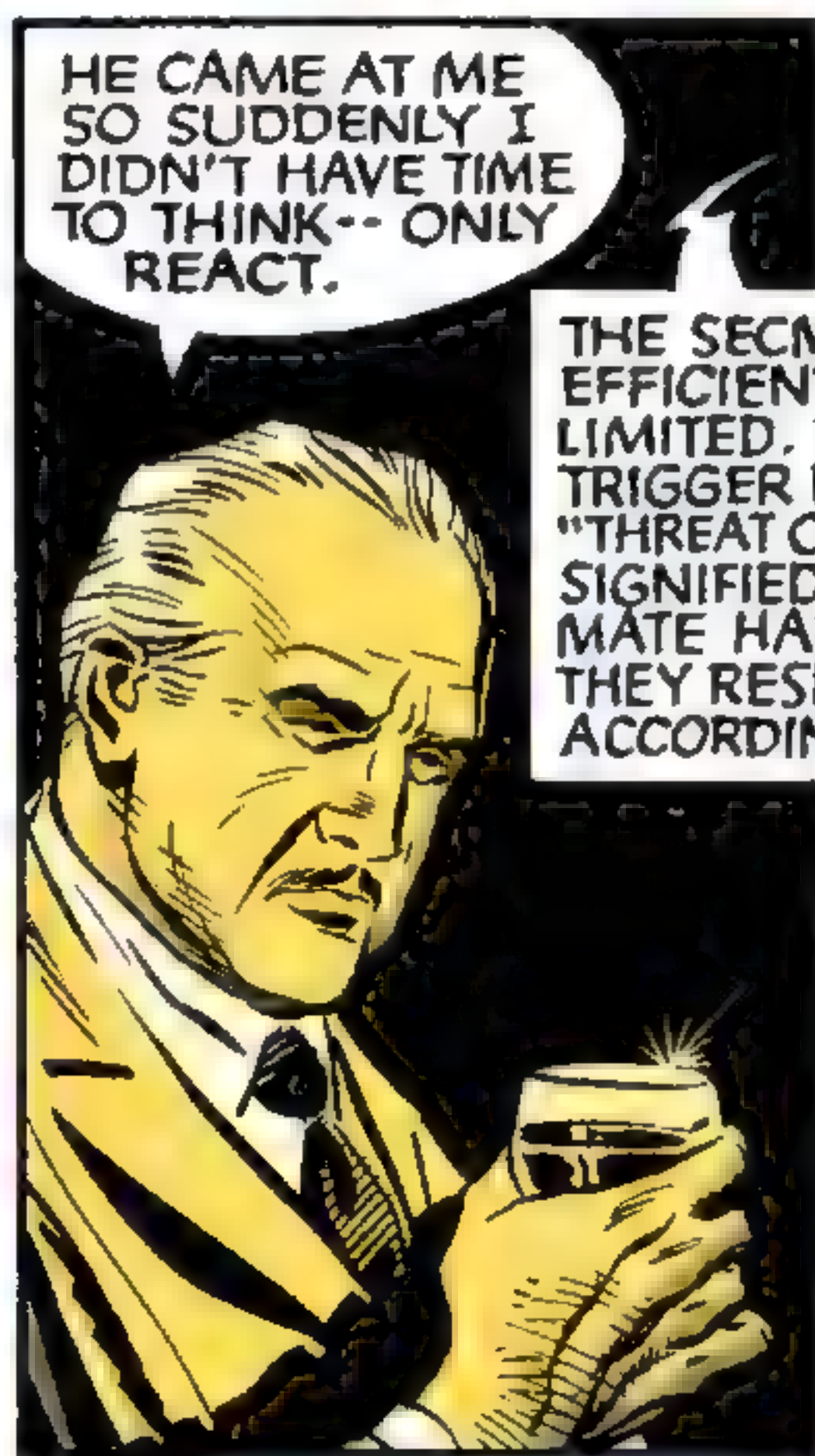
I HAVE NO SECRETS
FROM TOY.

TOY,
ANALYSIS,
IF YOU
PLEASE, OF
THE MAN
AND THE
SITUATION.

I DON'T
ASK THIS
LIGHTLY,
SEIGNEUR.







"YOU SHALL REAP THE MOST
FEARFUL OF WHIRLWINDS."

WE GOT
TROUBLE,
SEIGNEUR.

I PAY YOU,
NAGEL--AND QUITE
HANDSOMELY, I
MIGHT ADD--TO
DEAL WITH THAT.
NOT TO
BOTHER ME.

EXCUSE ME
THE HELL FOR
LIVING, DELACROIX,
BUT IF I TAKE A
FALL HERE, I'M
NOT GOING ALONE.
YOU'VE GOT
JUST AS MUCH
TO LOSE.

EXPLAIN.

THE
TROPHY.
YOUR
FATHER'S
TROPHY.

YOU
HAVE
HER.

NOT
ANYMORE.
SHE
BUSTED
LOOSE.

LOOK
WHAT SHE
DID TO
ME!

STRIKES ME AS
SOMETHING
OF AN
IMPROVEMENT.

SHE CAN'T
GET OFF THE
STATION, NAGEL.
SURELY SHE
CAN'T BE THAT
DIFFICULT TO
APPREHEND.

YOU WANT
HER SO
BAD, YOU
COME GET
HER.

HARDLY
THE
ATTITUDE
OF A TEAM
PLAYER,
OLD TOP.

SCREW
YOU,
WILLY-
BOY!

YOU AIN'T THE ONE
WITH A DAMN FIREFIGHT
IN YOUR DOCKS. YOU
AIN'T THE ONE WITH A
DAMN STRIKE FORCE
CRUISER POPPIN' UP
RIGHT ON YOUR
DOORSTEP!

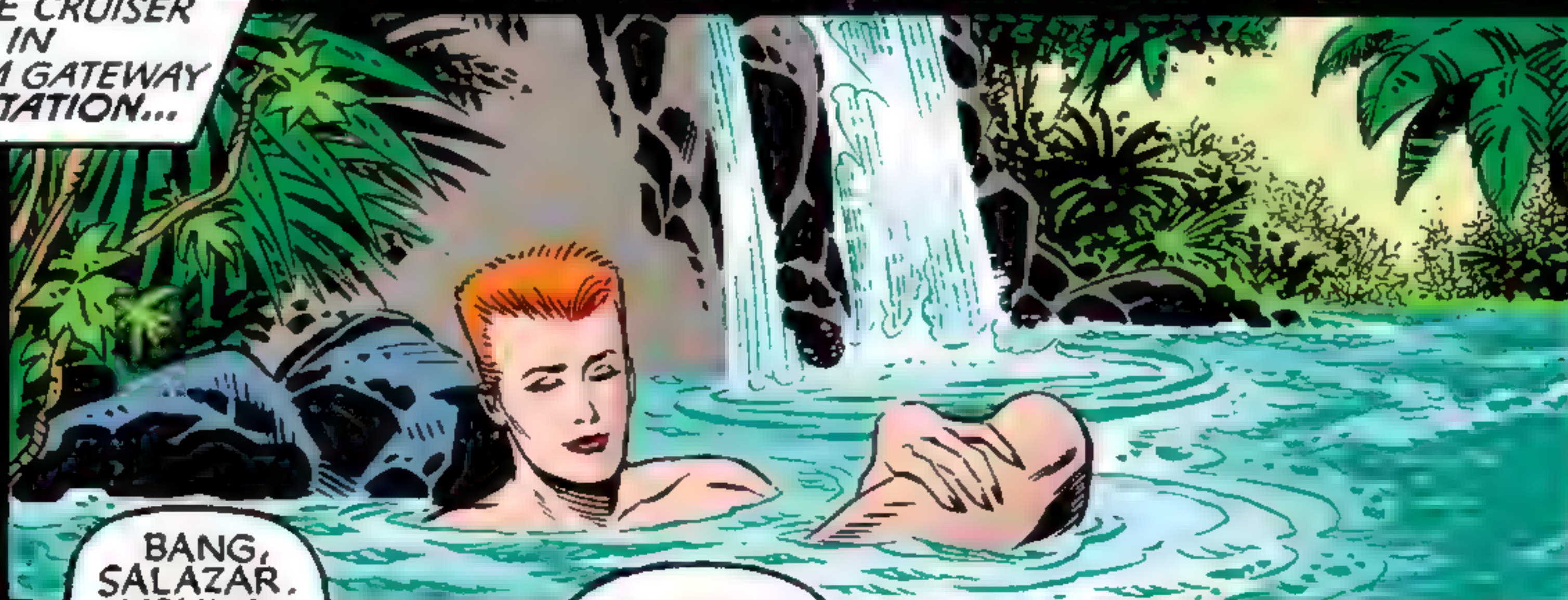
I FIGURE
IT'S EVERY MAN
FOR HIMSELF,
'LESS YOU START
PULLIN' SOME
MAJOR WEIGHT!

DON'T
THREATEN
ME, LITTLE
MAN.

REST
ASSURED,
THE SITU-
ATION IS
WELL IN
HAND.

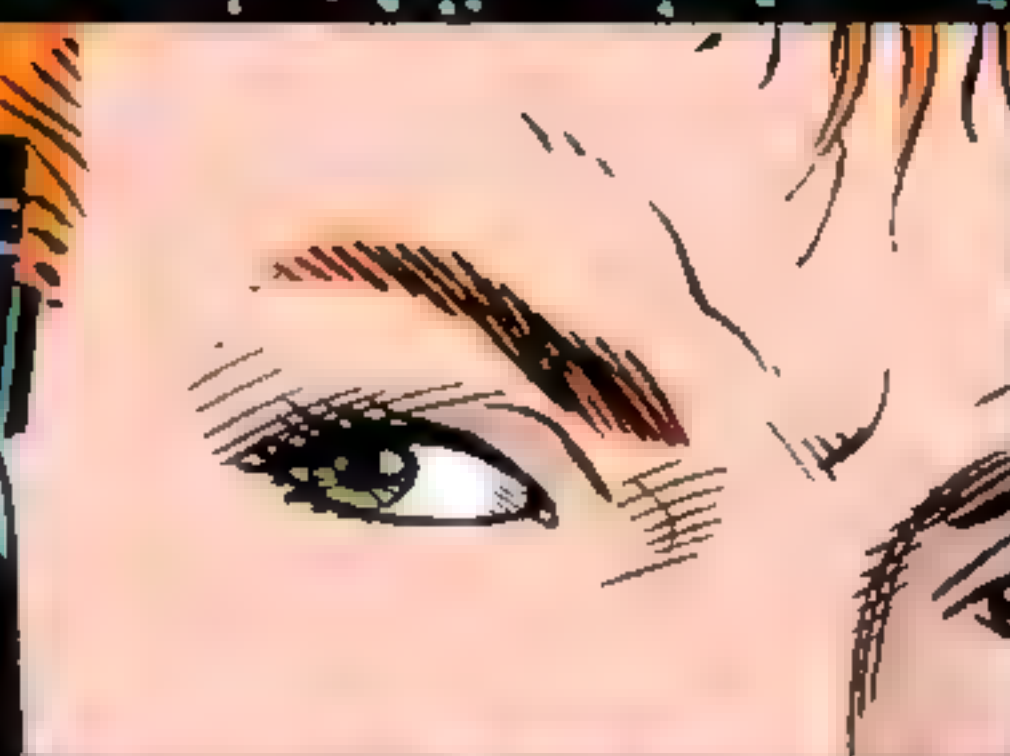
TRUST
ME.

STRIKE FORCE CRUISER
APPLESEED, IN
TRANSIT FROM GATEWAY
TO SAMARA STATION...

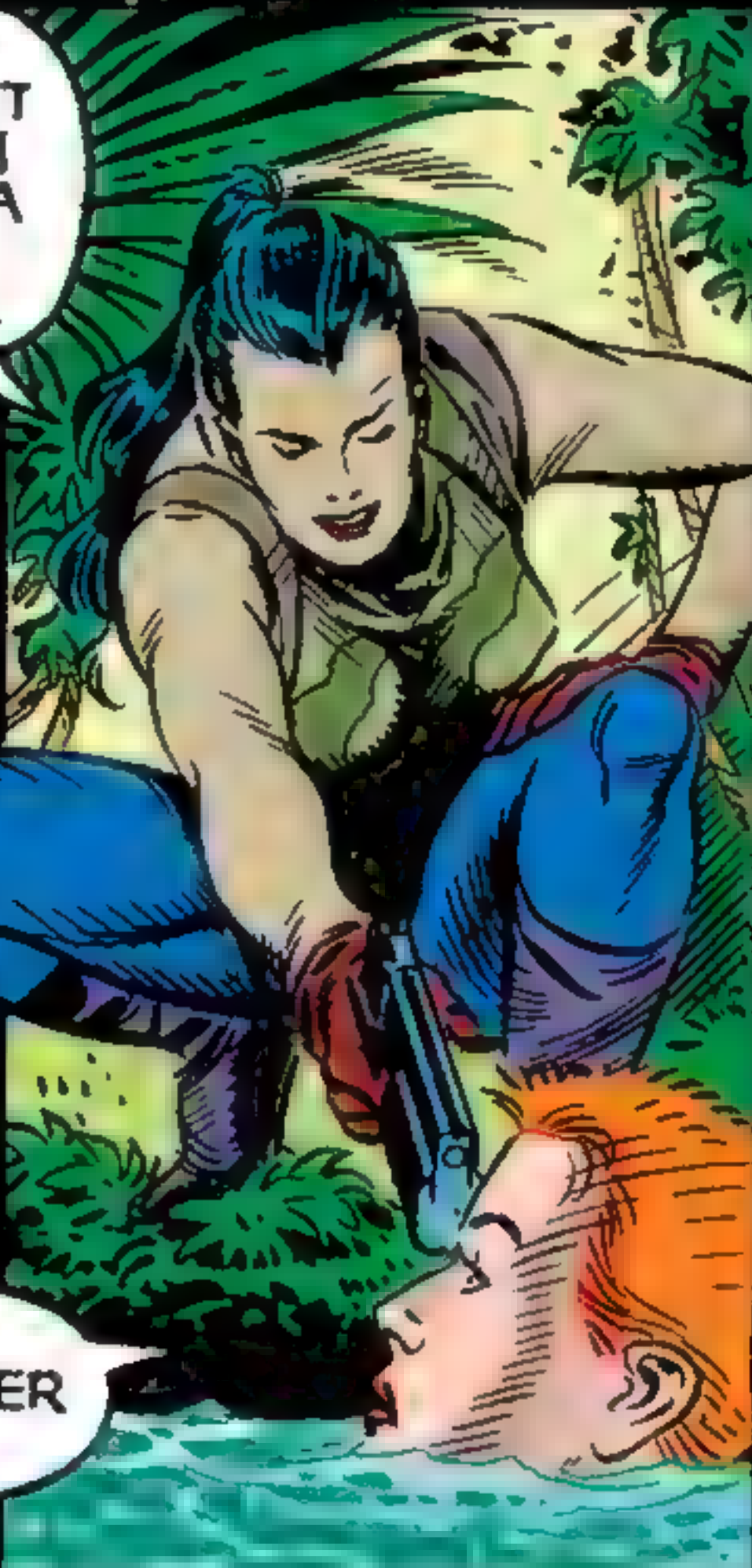


BANG,
SALAZAR.
YOU'RE
DEAD.

FUNNY. I
THOUGHT I
LOCKED THE
DOOR.

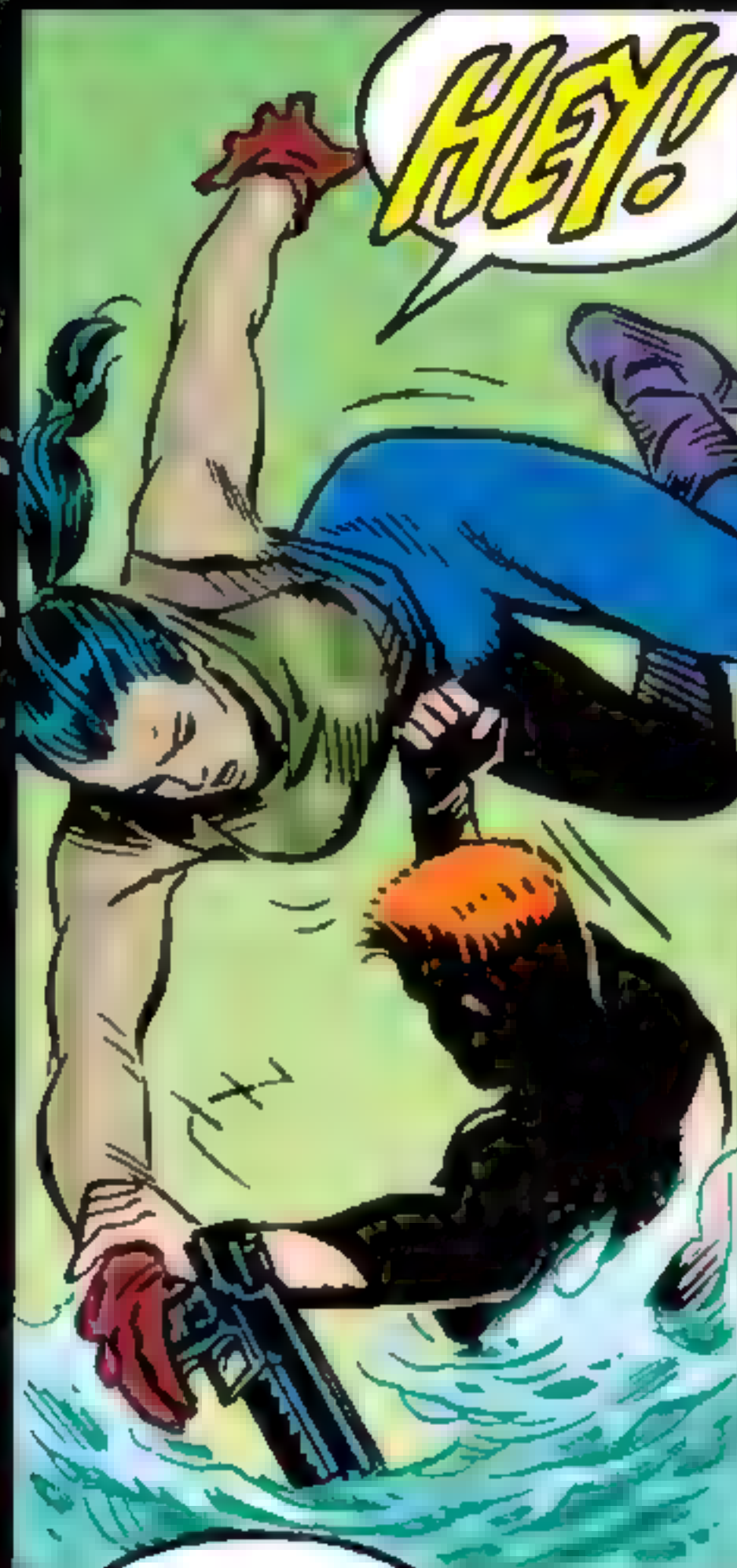


ON MY
SHIP, AIN'T
NO SUCH
THING AS A
LOCKED
DOOR.

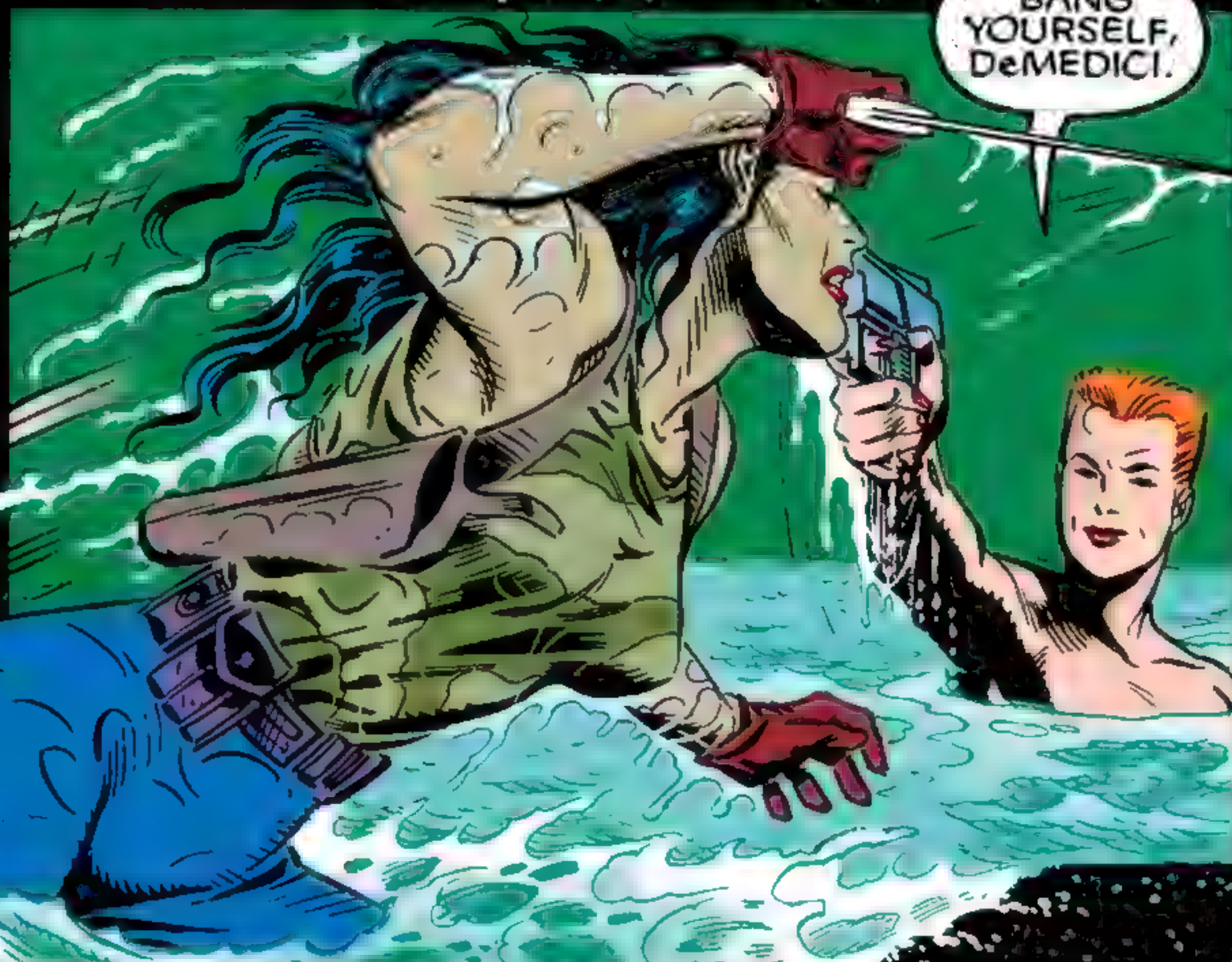


NO
RESPECT
FOR *PRIVACY*,
EITHER, I
SEE.

I'LL
REMEMBER
THAT.



HEY!

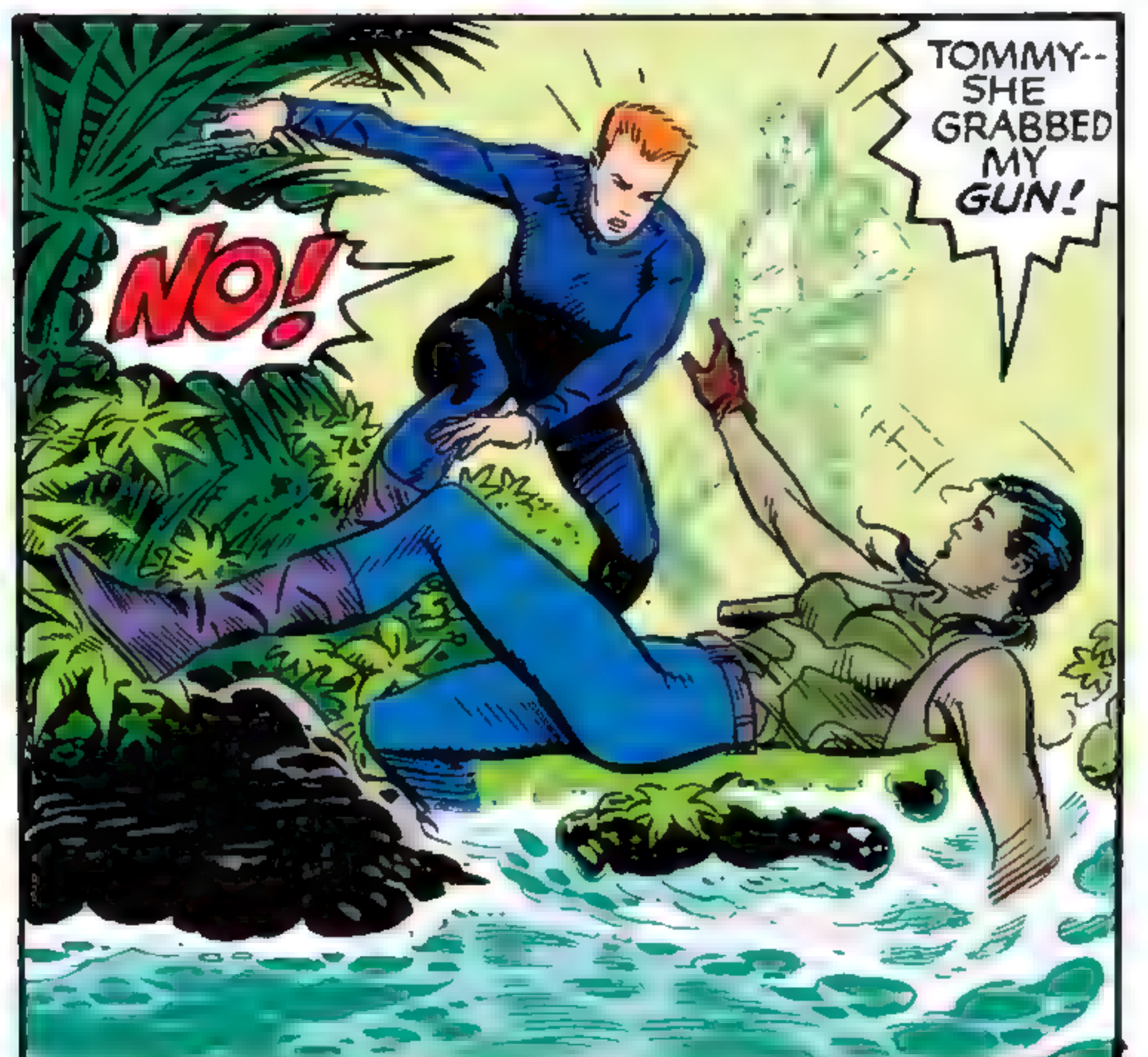
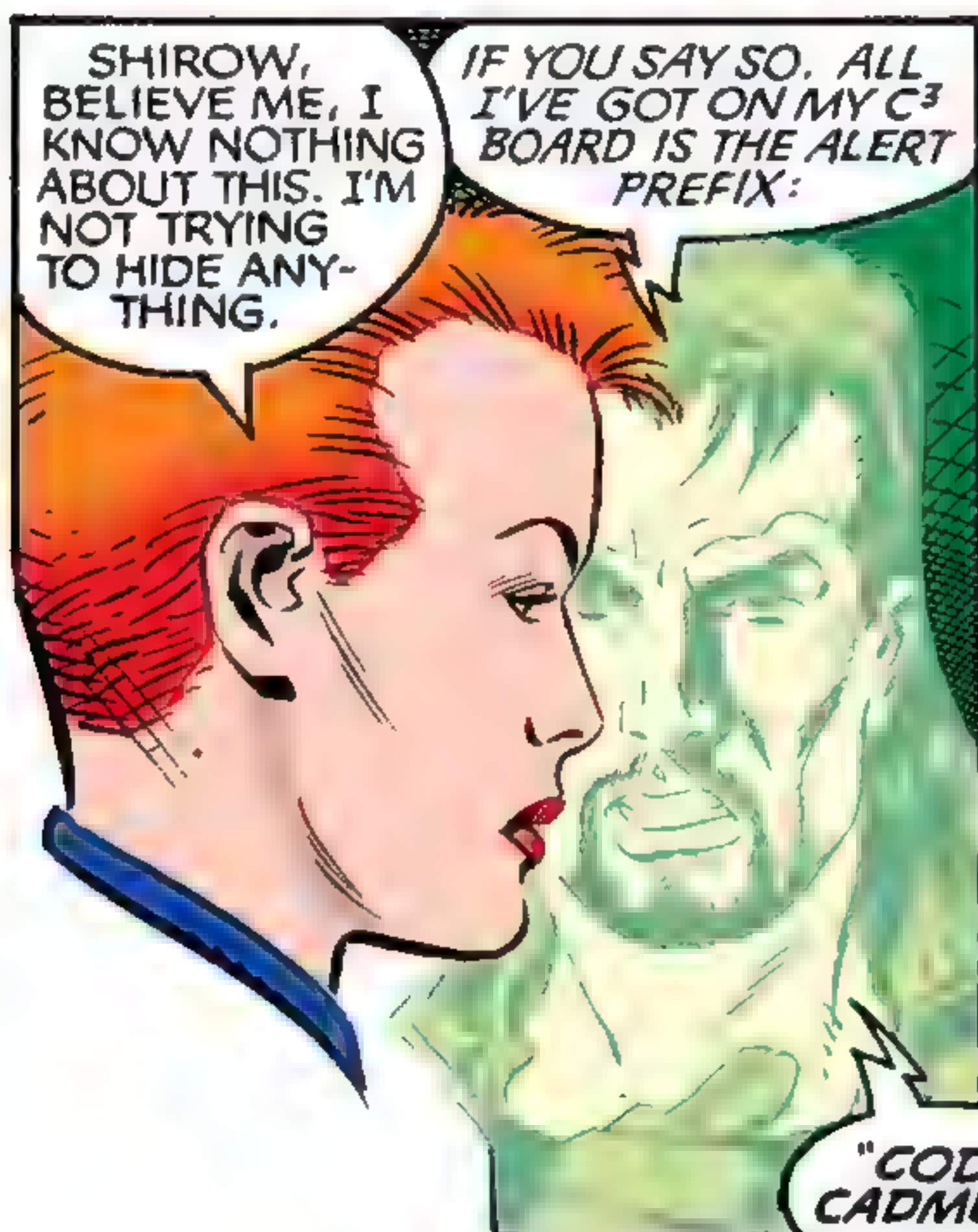
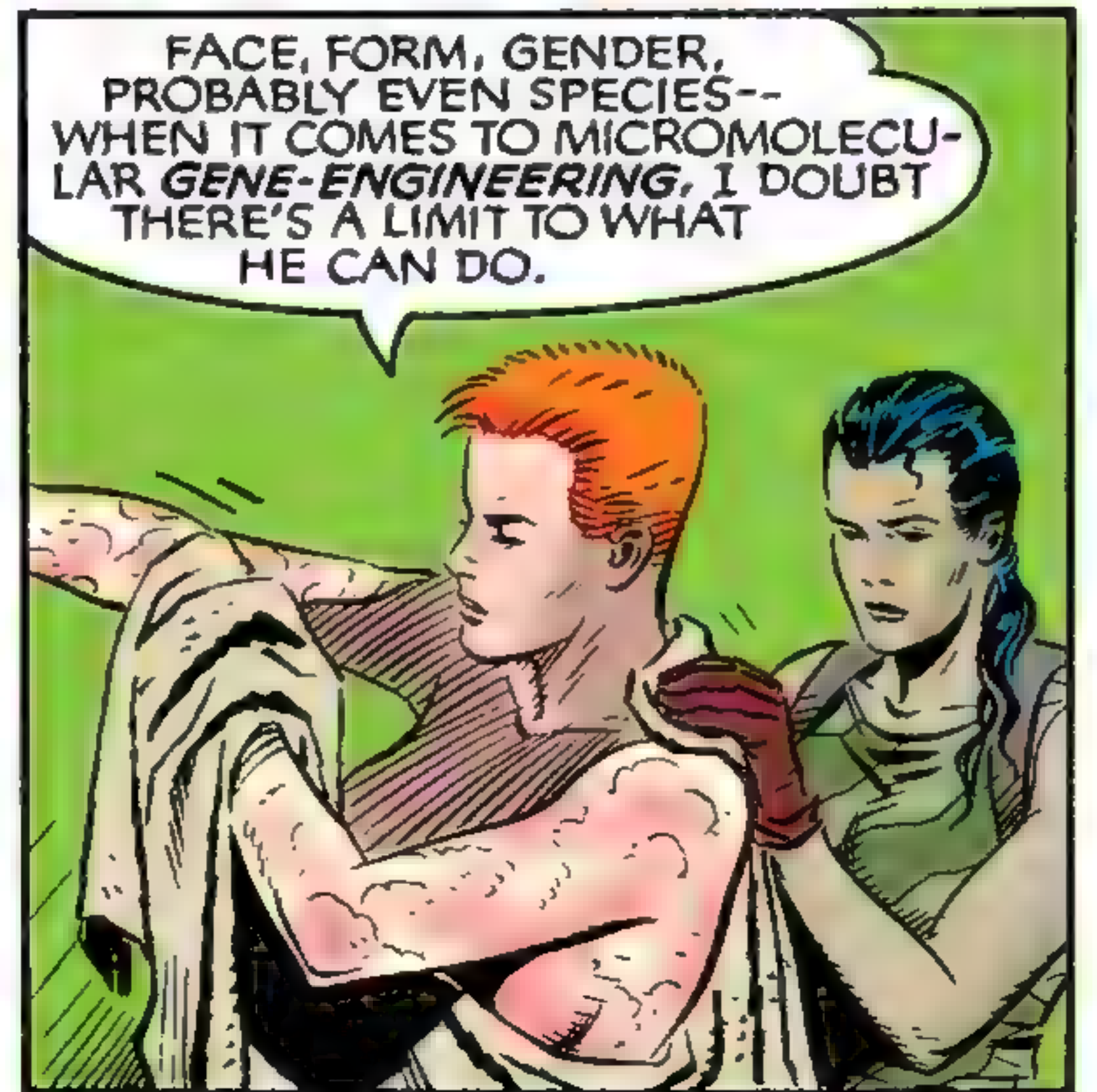
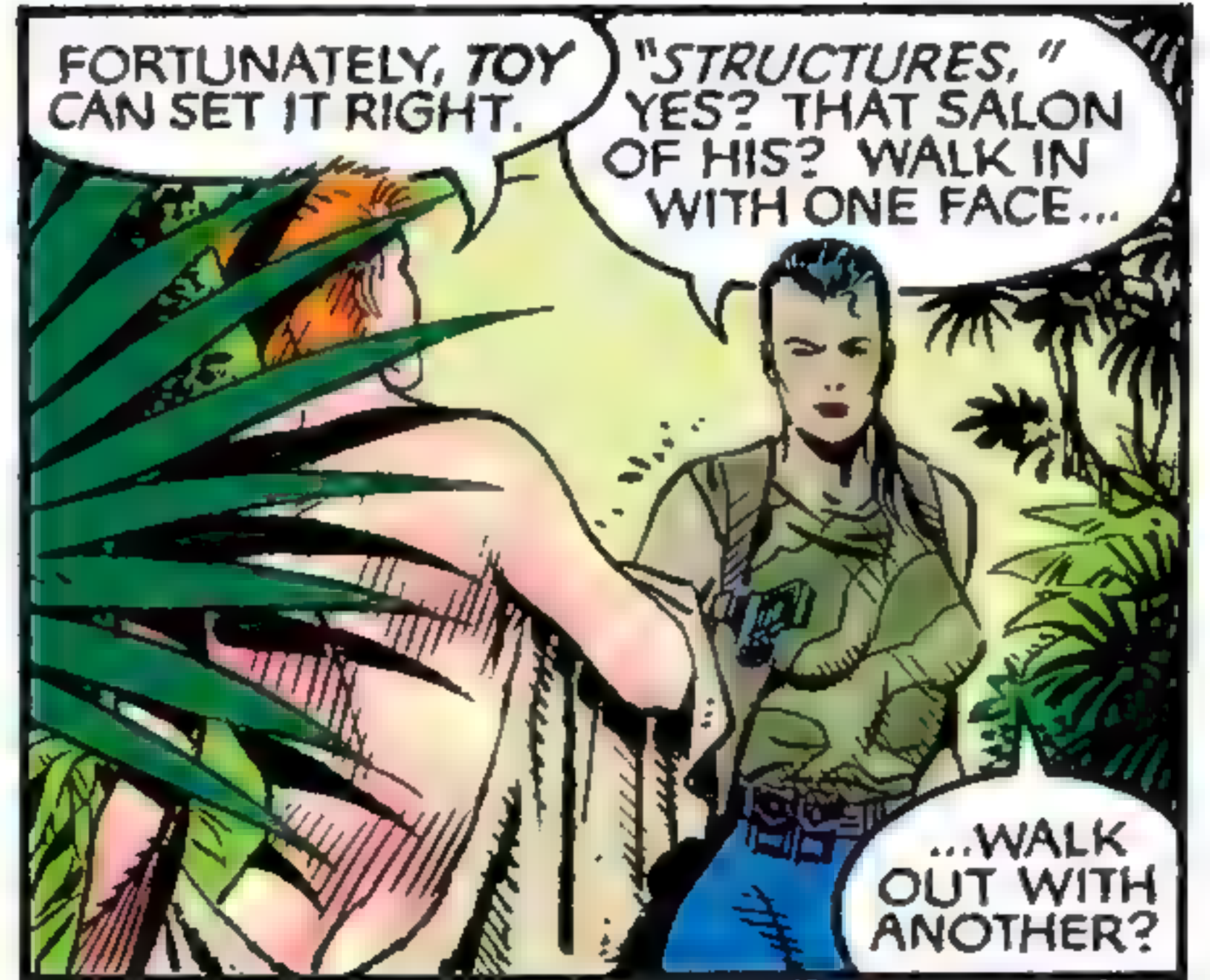


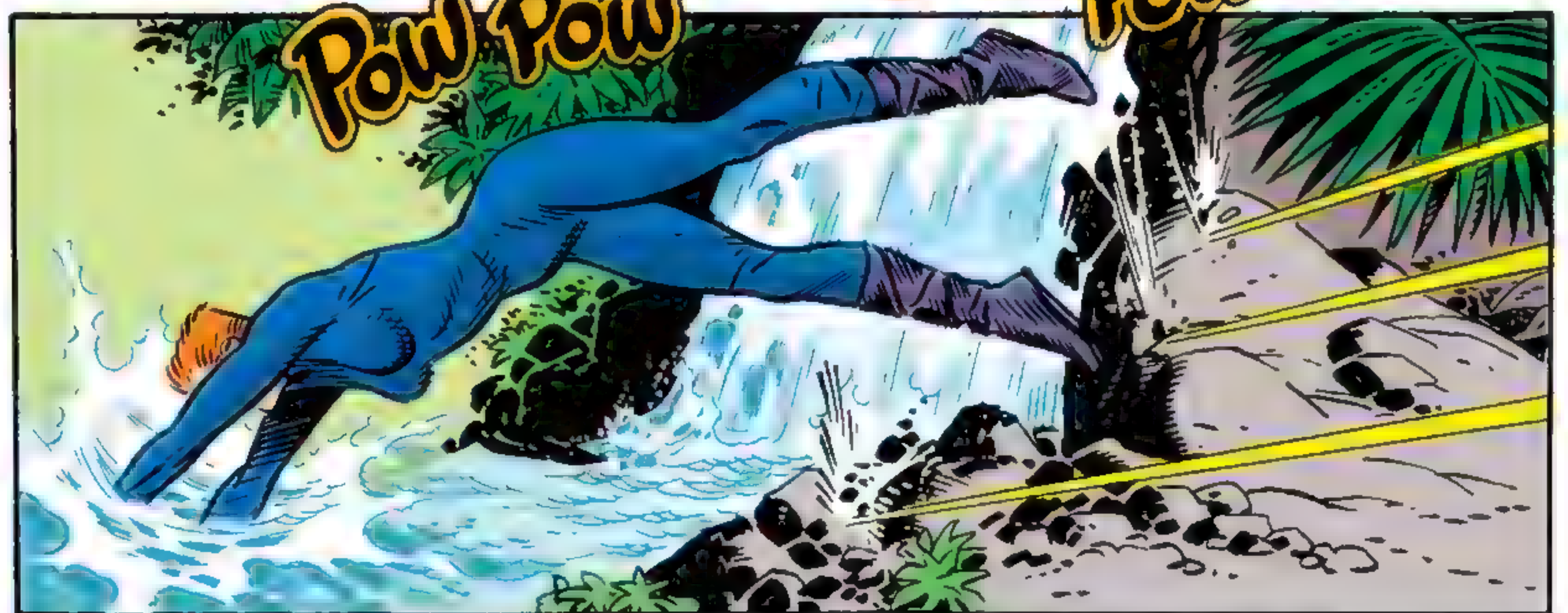
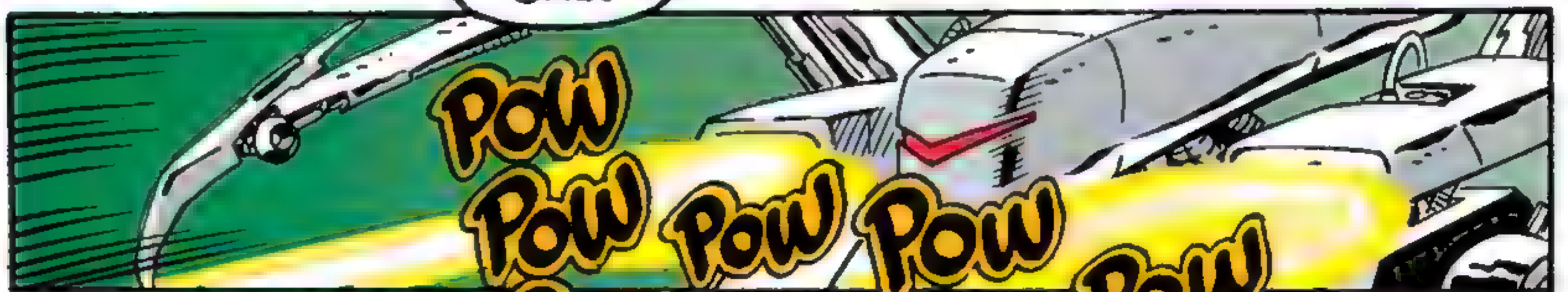
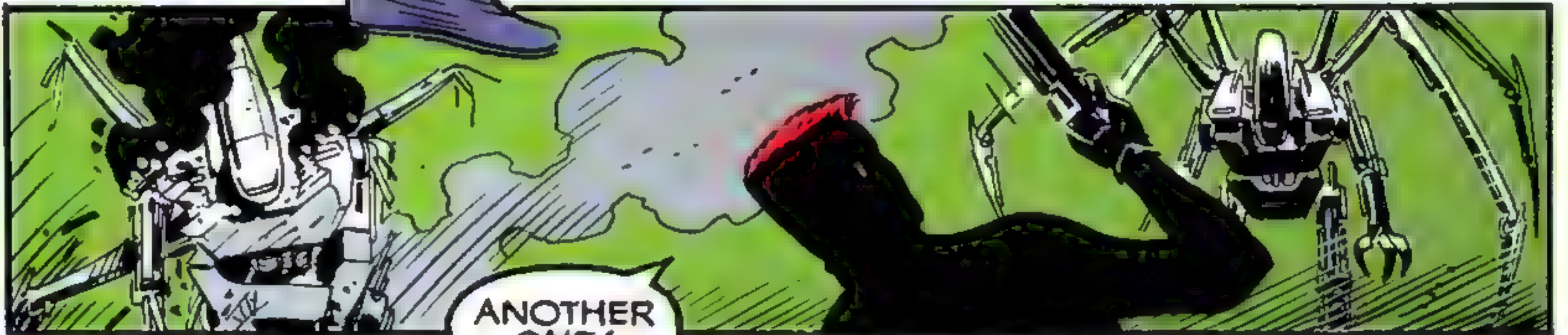
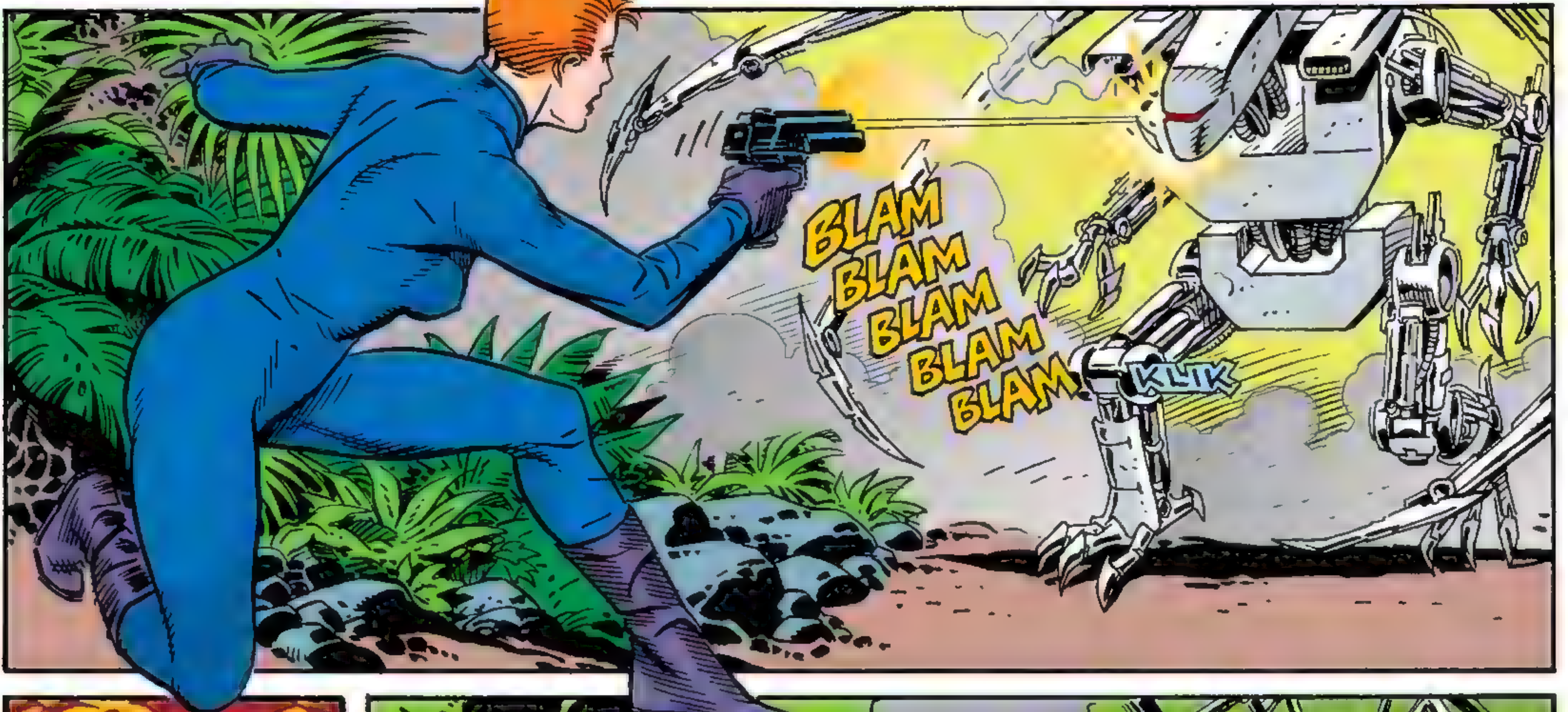
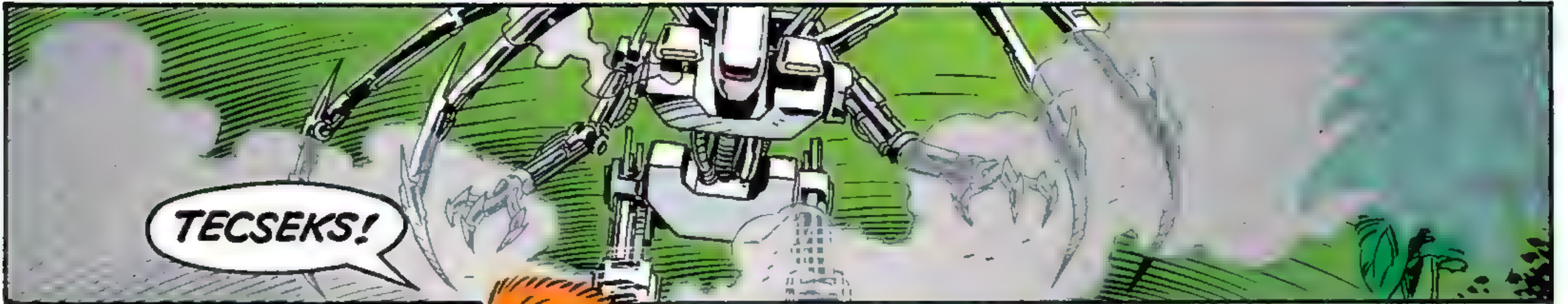
"BANG"
YOURSELF,
DeMEDICI.

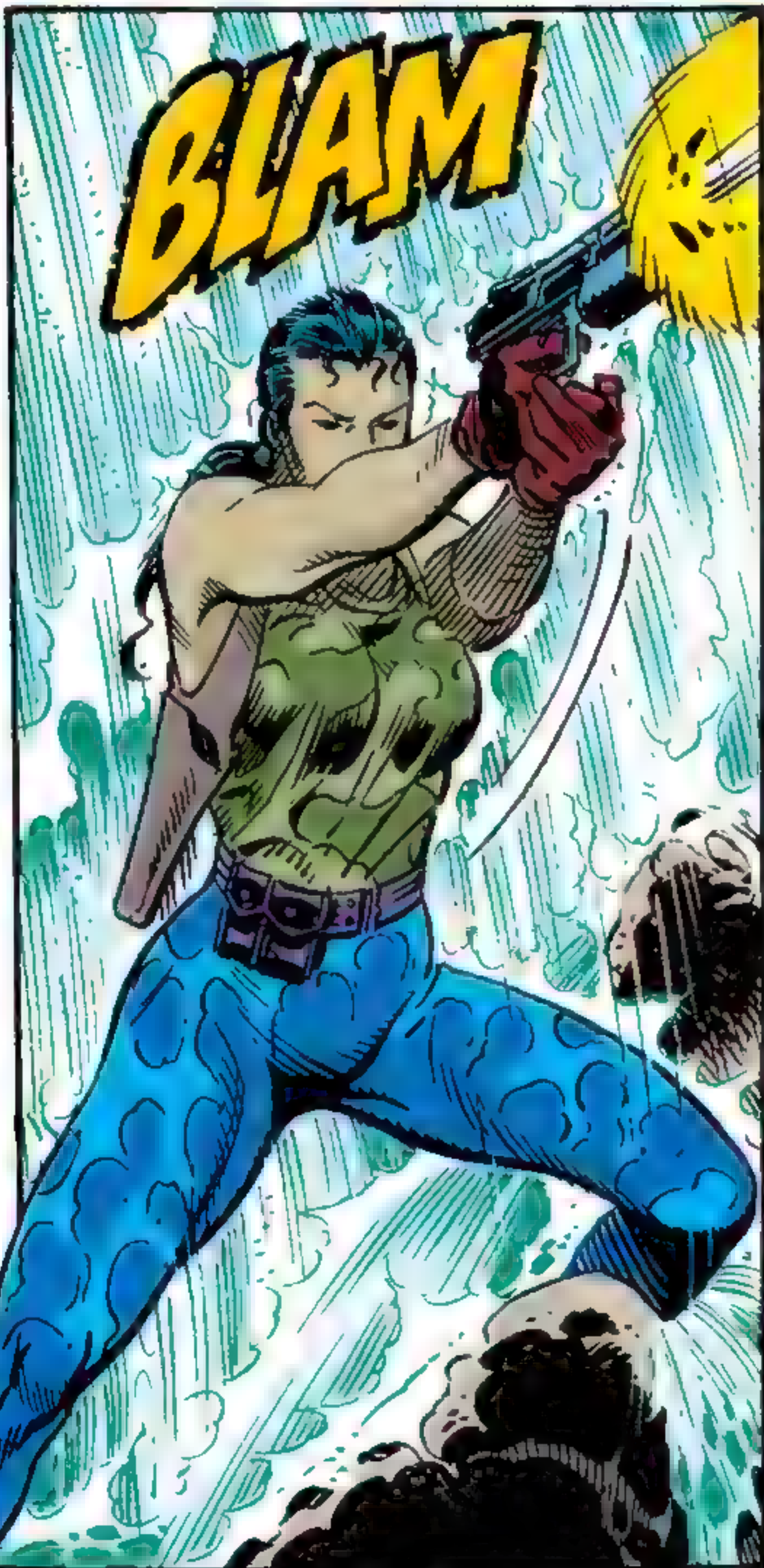
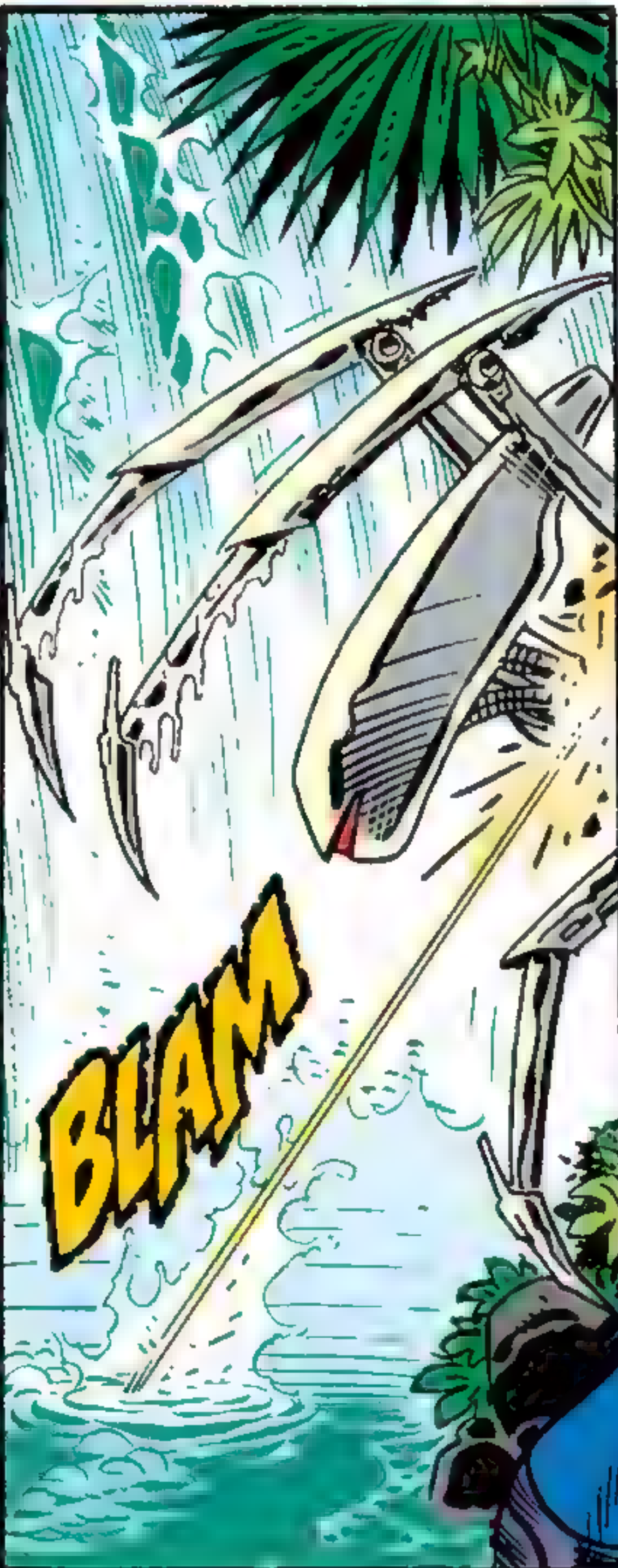
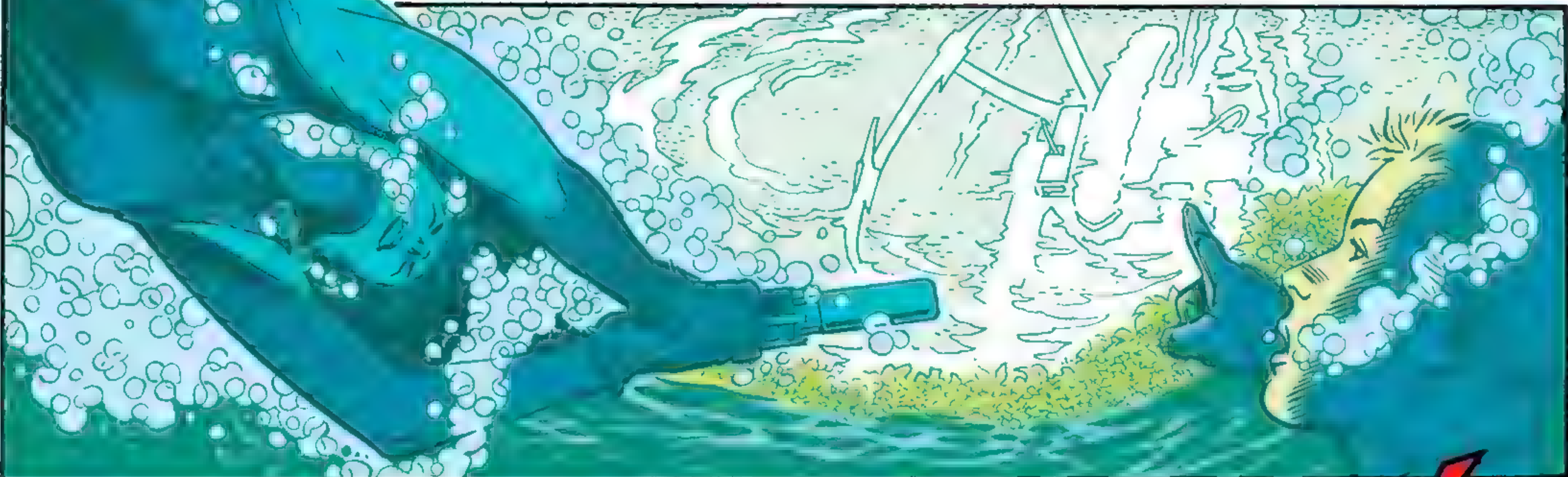
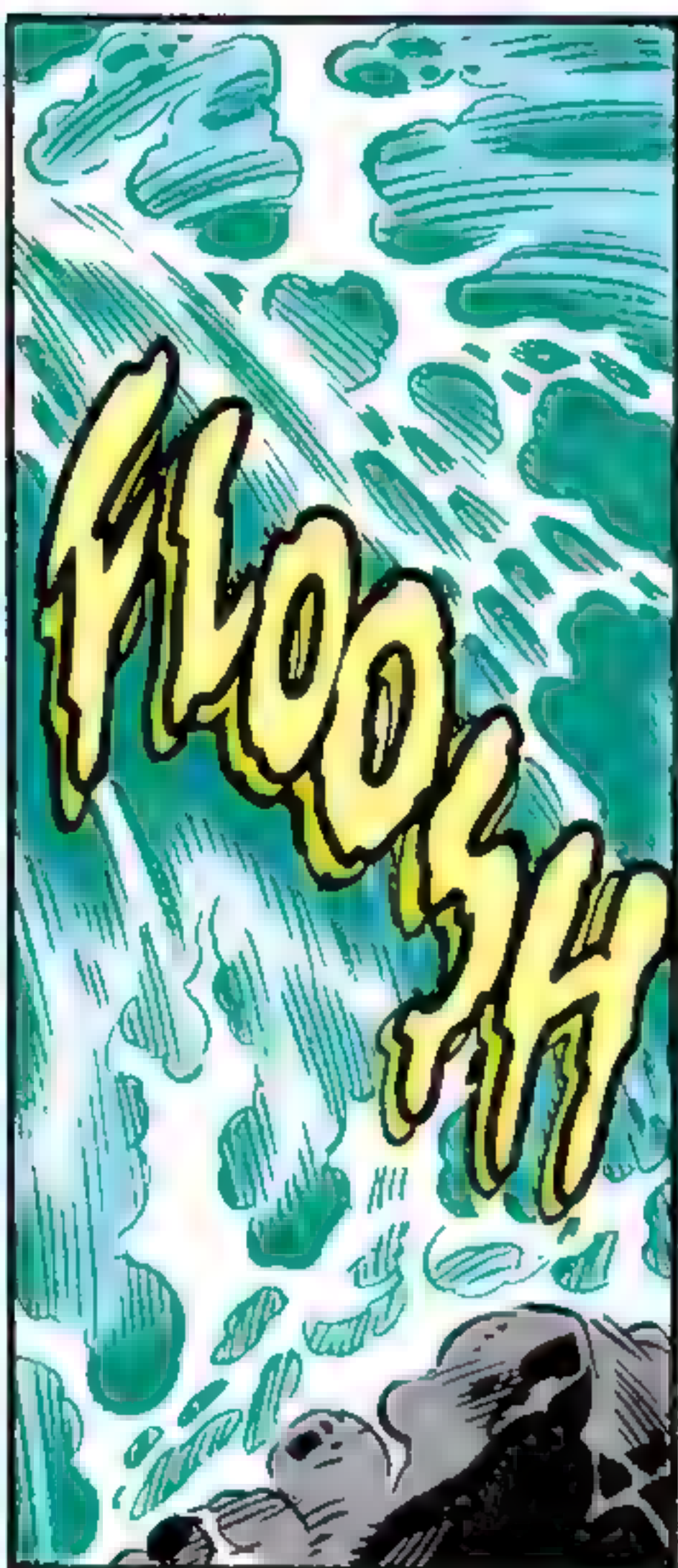
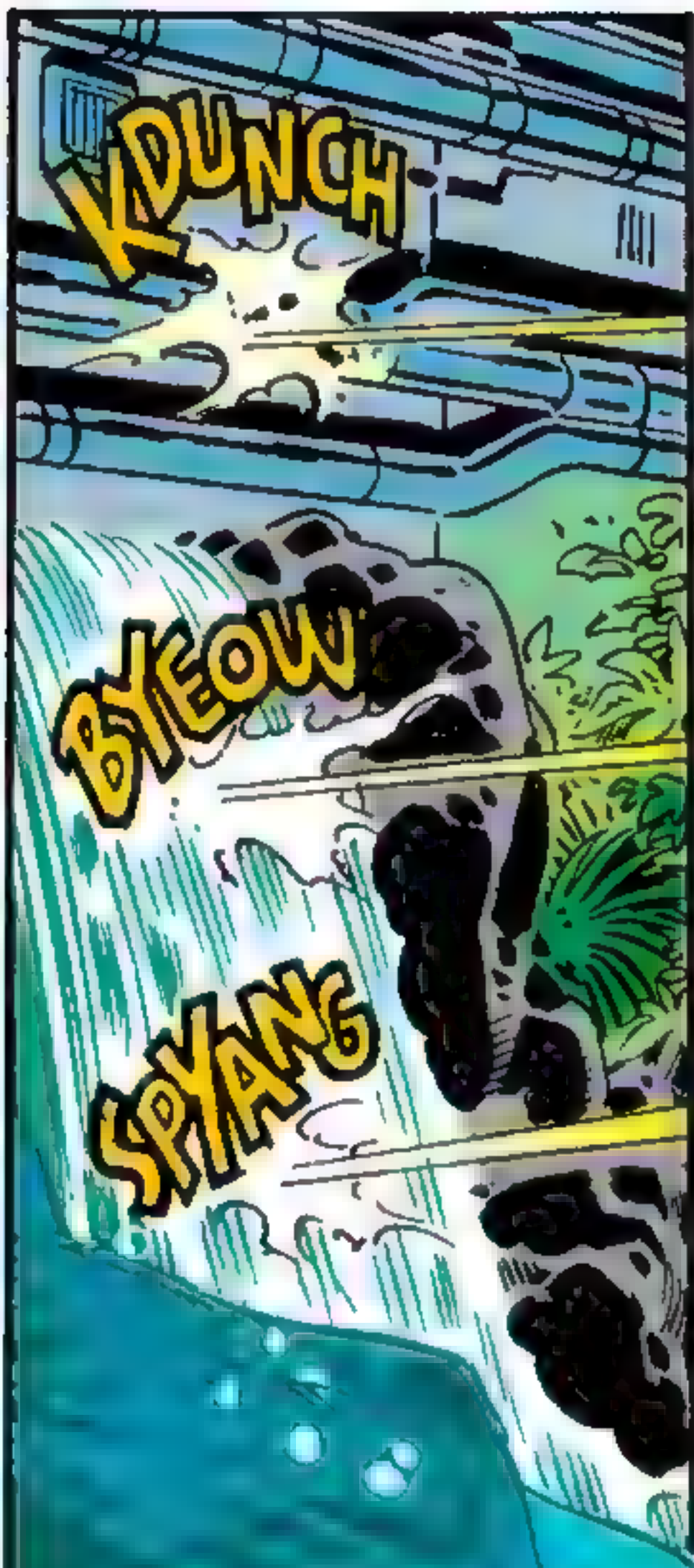


YOU'RE
VERY
GOOD.

I WAS
LOOKING FOR
A MOVE, AND I
DIDN'T SEE THAT
COMING.

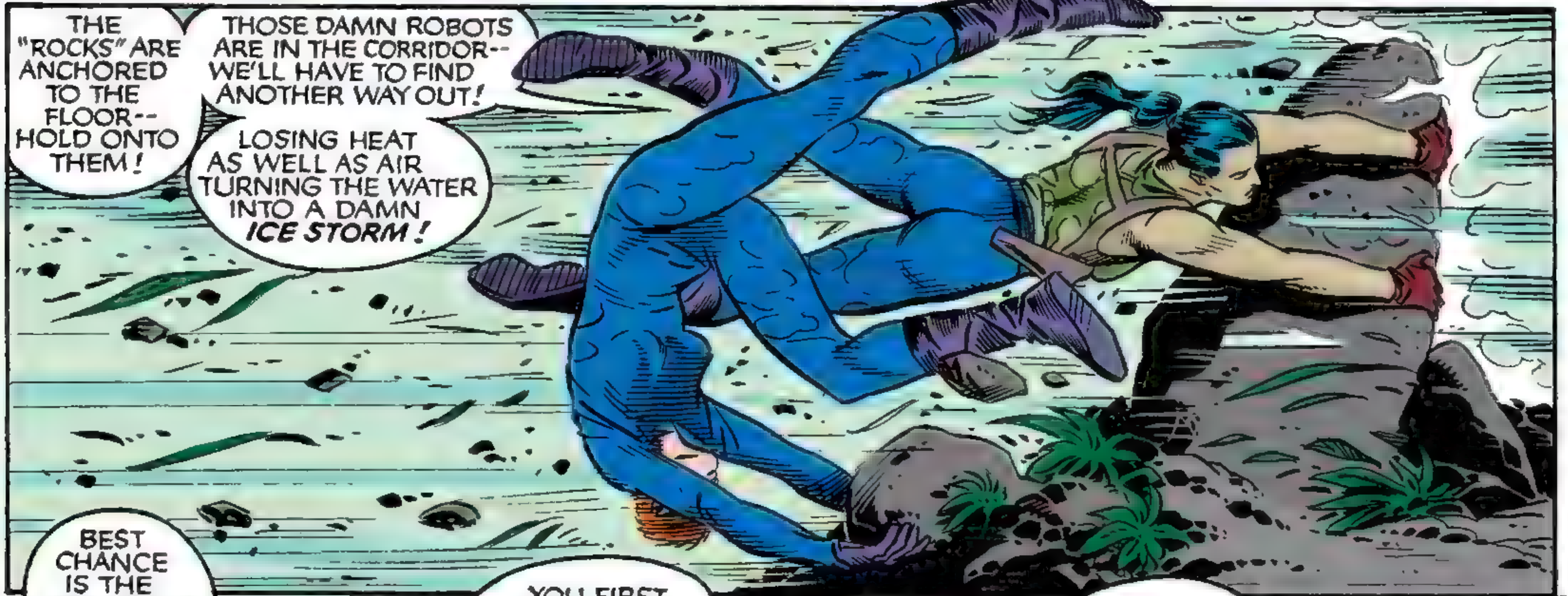








EXPLOSIVE
DECOMPRESSION!



THE
"ROCKS" ARE
ANCHORED
TO THE
FLOOR--
HOLD ONTO
THEM!

THOSE DAMN ROBOTS
ARE IN THE CORRIDOR--
WE'LL HAVE TO FIND
ANOTHER WAY OUT!

LOSING HEAT
AS WELL AS AIR
TURNING THE WATER
INTO A DAMN
ICE STORM!

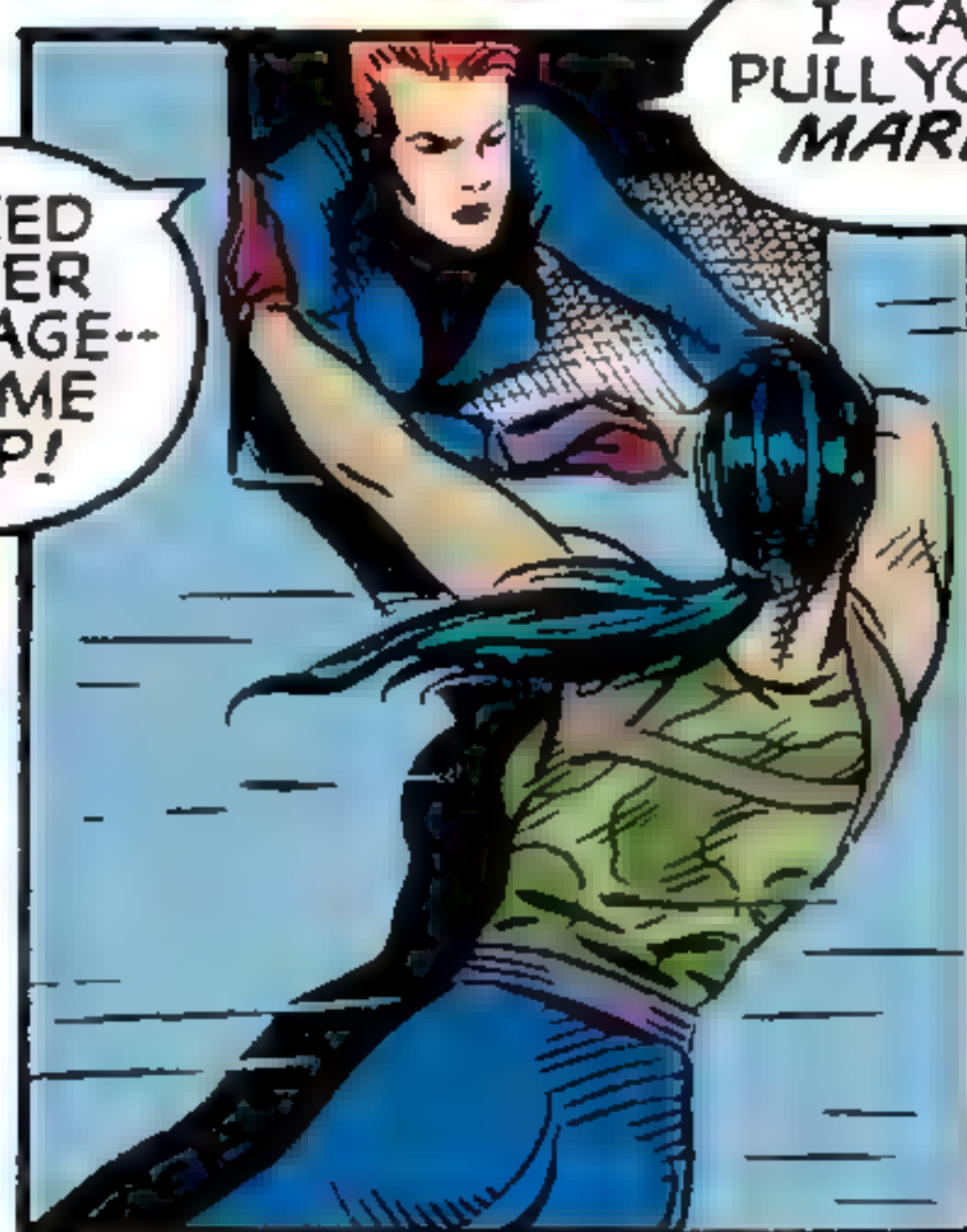
BEST
CHANCE
IS THE
VENTILATION
DUCTS!

YOU FIRST,
SALAZAR, SINCE
YOU SEEM TO
KNOW WHAT
WE'RE UP
AGAINST!

I NEED
BETTER
LEVERAGE--
OR SOME
HELP!

I CAN'T
PULL YOU IN--
MARIA!

Oh,
JOY.



THOSE TIN
BASTARDS
CAN WALK ON
CEILINGS!

GOT
HIM!

NOT ONLY LOOK
LIKE ALIENS, THEY
GOT ALL THE RIGHT
SKILLS AS WELL!



SHRAPNEL
--I'M HIT!



Oh, NO
YOU DON'T,
DeMEDICI!

IT'S
NOT YOUR
TIME TO
DIE!

FROM YOUR
MOUTH...
TO GOD'S EAR...
eh, SALAZAR?



ABSOLUTELY!

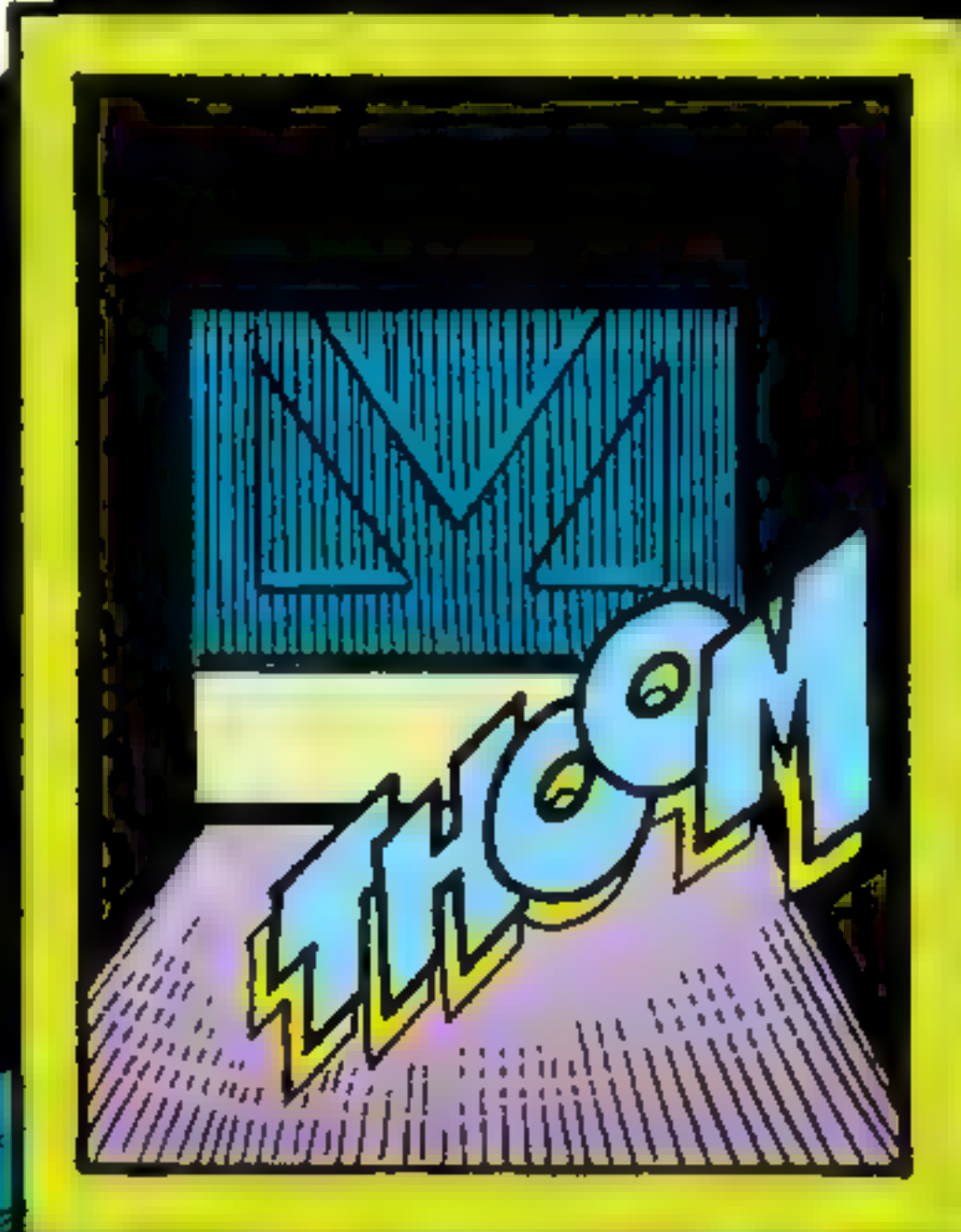


I GUESS HE WAS LISTENING.

YOU'RE WELCOME.

CAN'T STAY HERE, THOUGH. THEY'LL FIGURE OUT WHERE WE WENT... COME AFTER...

THEY'RE DESIGNED... TO FUNCTION... IN ANY ENVIRONMENT.



FIRST THINGS FIRST, YOU BLOODY COW-- WHAT THE HELL HAVE YOU BROUGHT ABOARD MY SHIP?!

TECSEKS!

A PROJECT OF TOY'S!

A MOVIE PROP HE THOUGHT MIGHT HAVE PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS.



TOMMY, YOU READ ME, PARTNER? YOU HEARING THIS?



IF THEY'RE AFTER US, THEY'RE AFTER HIM.

DAMN YOU, WHY?!

I DON'T KNOW.

THEY'RE DESIGNED TO CLEAN OUT ALIEN HIVES.

A CRATE WAS SENT ALONG IN CASE WE GOT THE CHANCE TO FIELD-TEST THEM.



AND YOU DIDN'T THINK TO TELL US?

AT THE PROPER PLACE AND TIME...

...I WOULD HAVE. AFTER ALL, I HAD THE ONLY KEY.



LET ME GUESS, THAT CADMUS CODE.

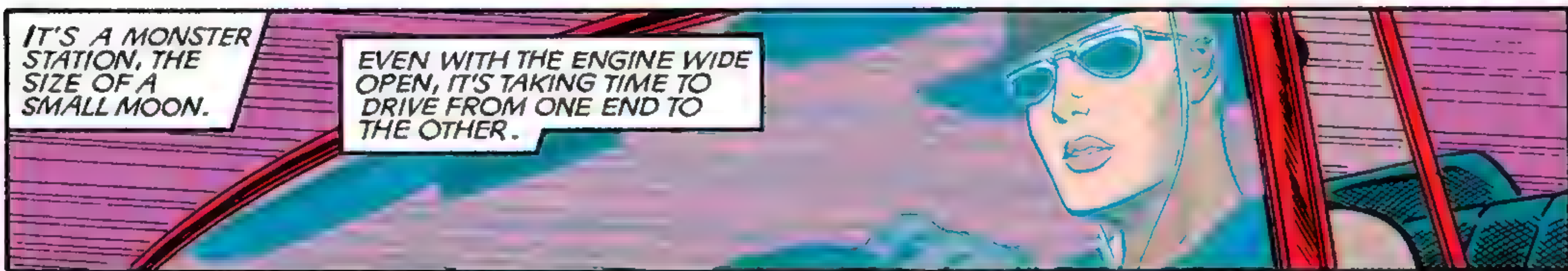
SURPRISE, BLONDIE. SOMEONE JUST DECIDED YOU'RE AS EXPENDABLE AS US.

YOU GOT ANY MORE SURPRISES, SALAZAR, TELL ME NOW.



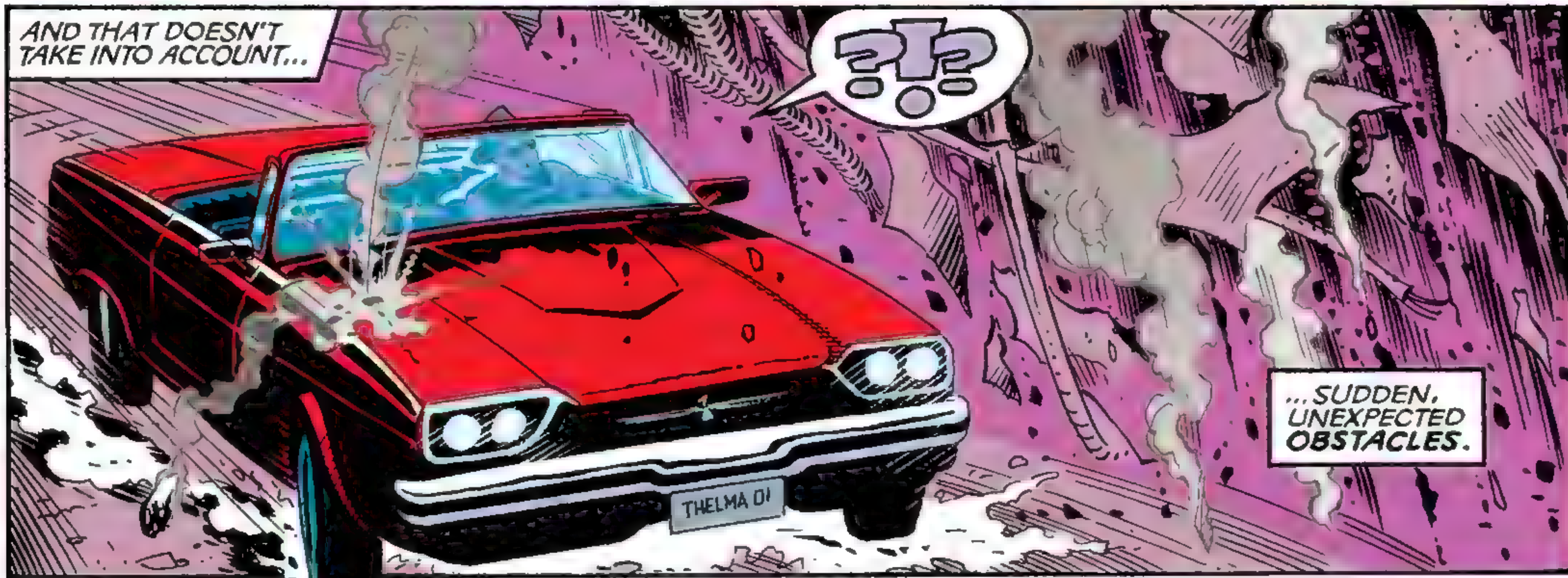
OR I SWEAR, WHAT THOSE CHROME BUGS HAVE IN STORE FOR YOU...

...IS NOTHING COMPARED TO WHAT I'LL DO!



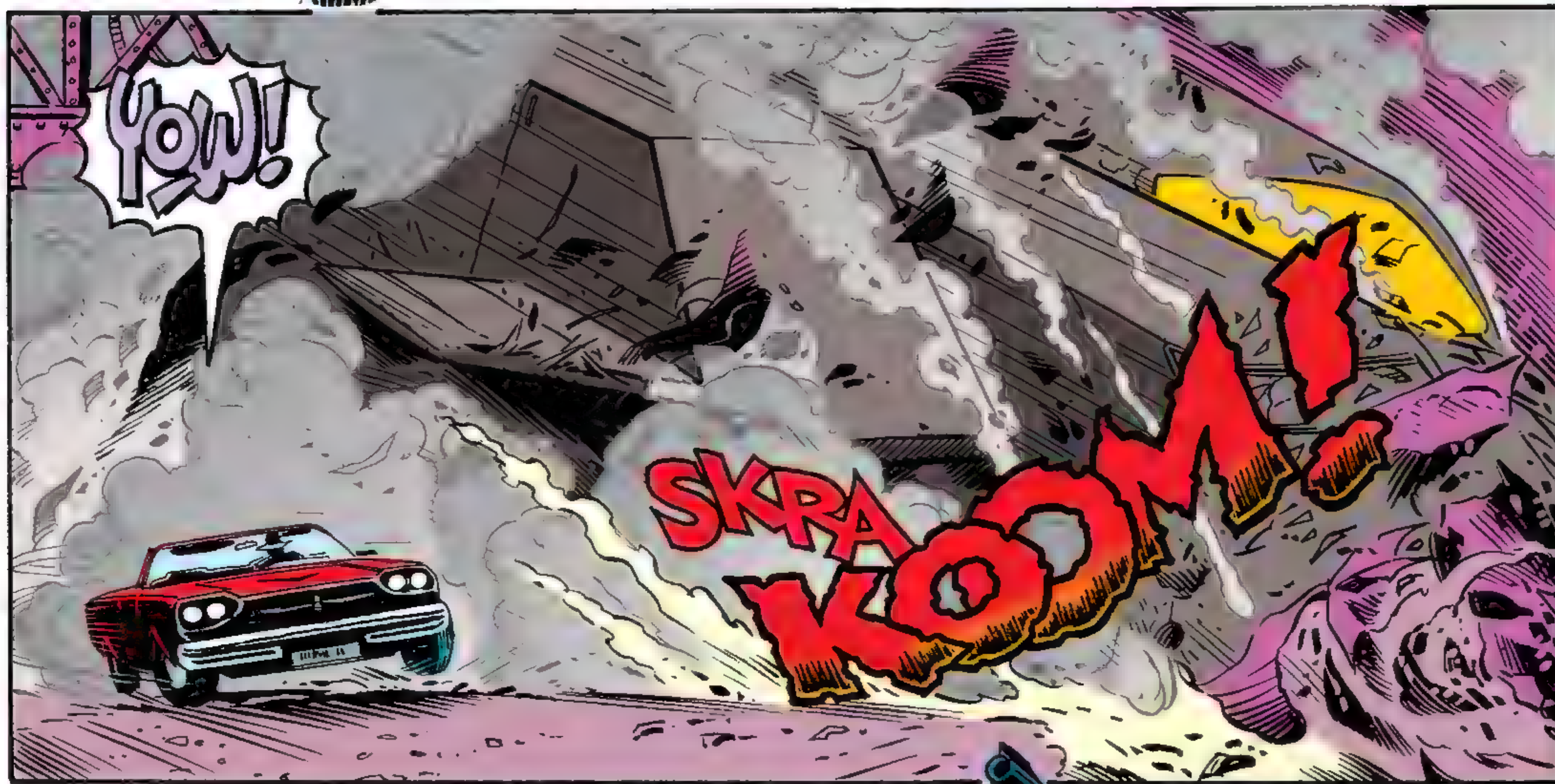
IT'S A MONSTER STATION, THE SIZE OF A SMALL MOON.

EVEN WITH THE ENGINE WIDE OPEN, IT'S TAKING TIME TO DRIVE FROM ONE END TO THE OTHER.



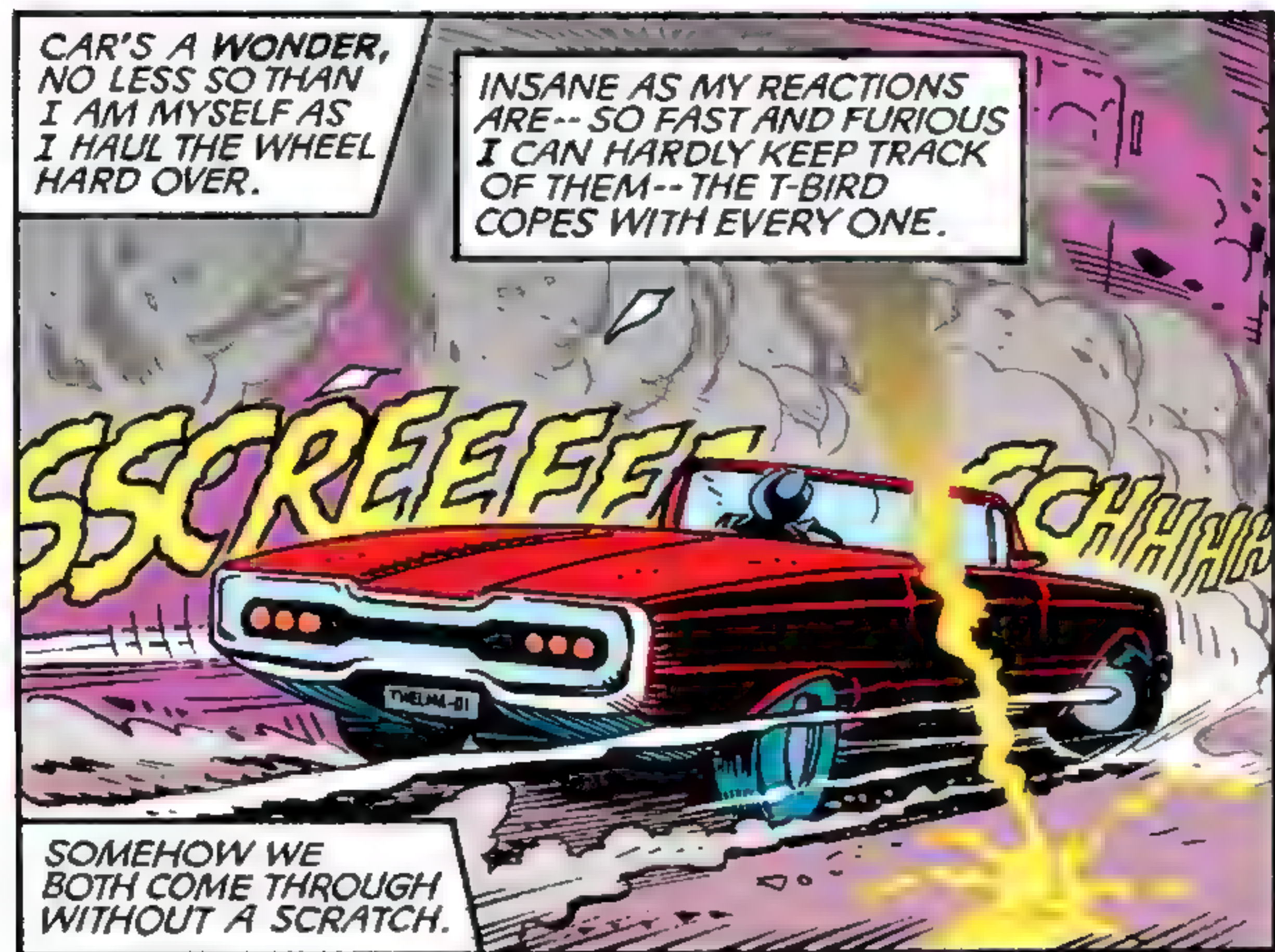
AND THAT DOESN'T TAKE INTO ACCOUNT...

...SUDDEN, UNEXPECTED OBSTACLES.



Yow!

SKRA KLOOM!



CAR'S A WONDER, NO LESS SO THAN I AM MYSELF AS I HAUL THE WHEEL HARD OVER.

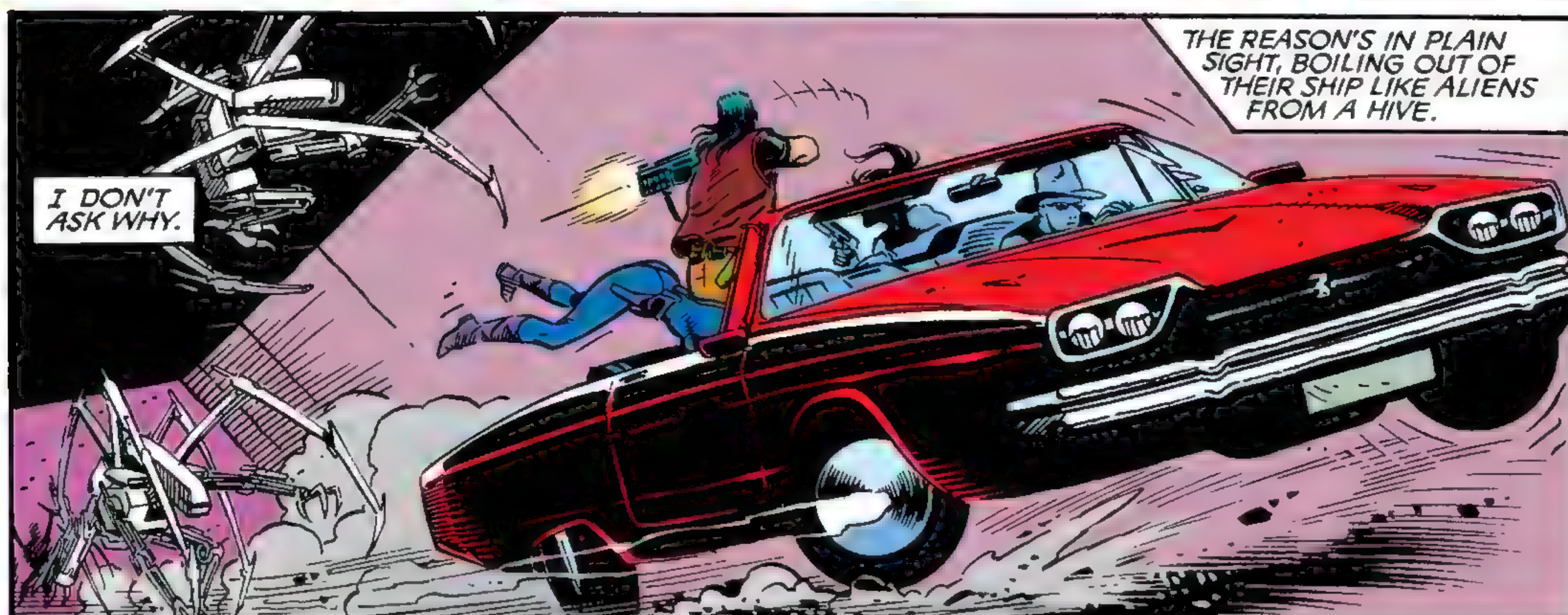
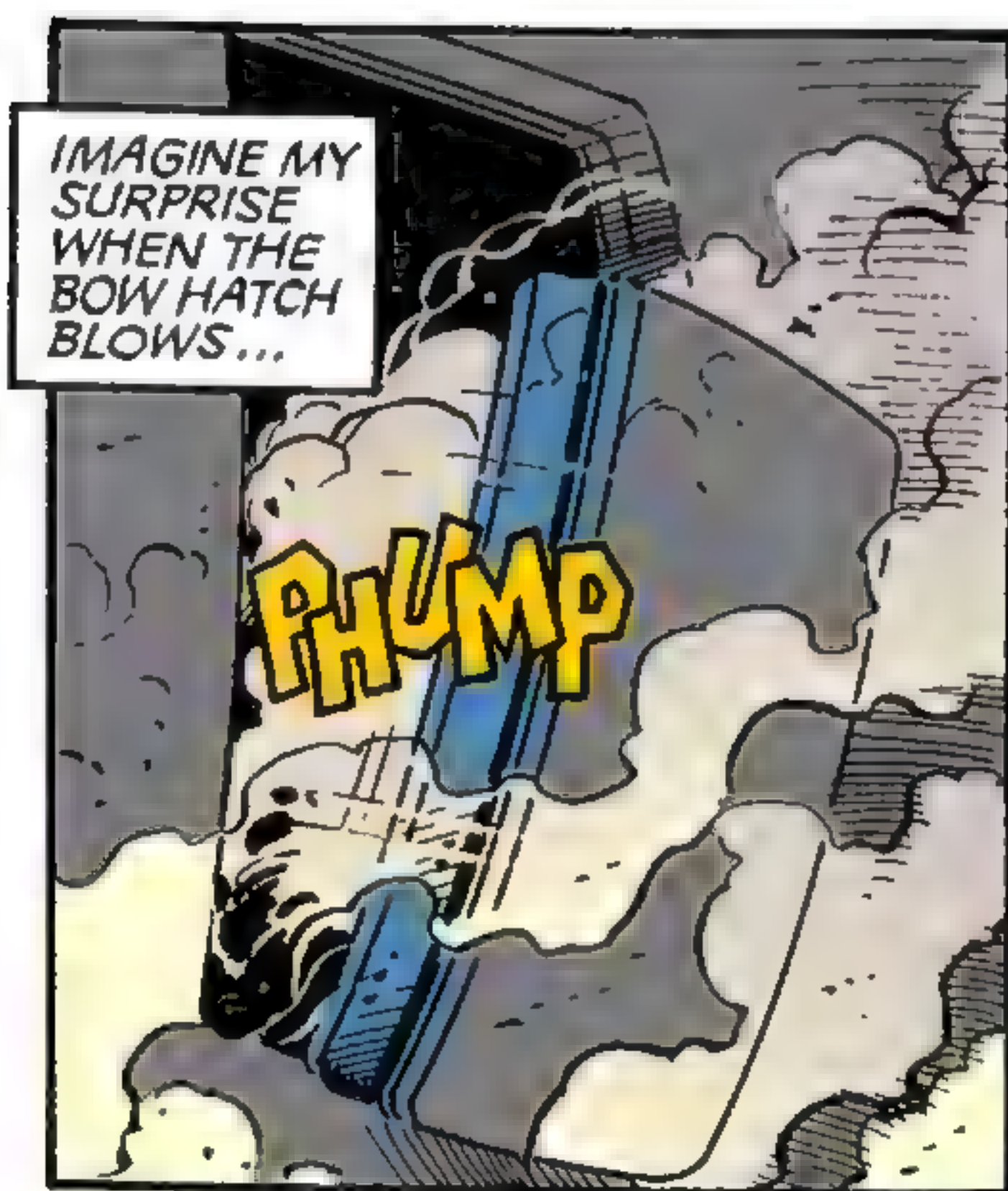
INSANE AS MY REACTIONS ARE-- SO FAST AND FURIOUS I CAN HARDLY KEEP TRACK OF THEM-- THE T-BIRD COPES WITH EVERY ONE.

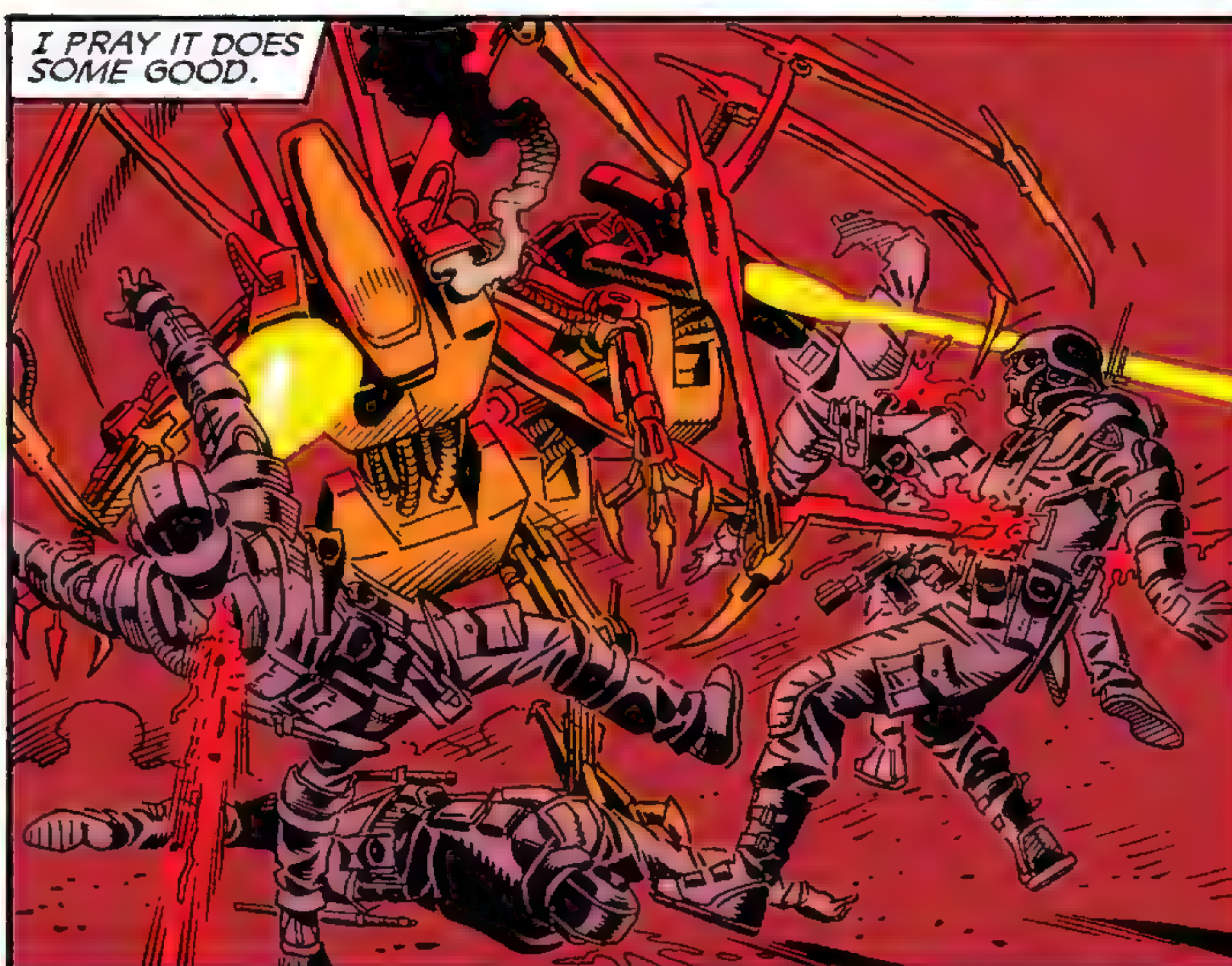
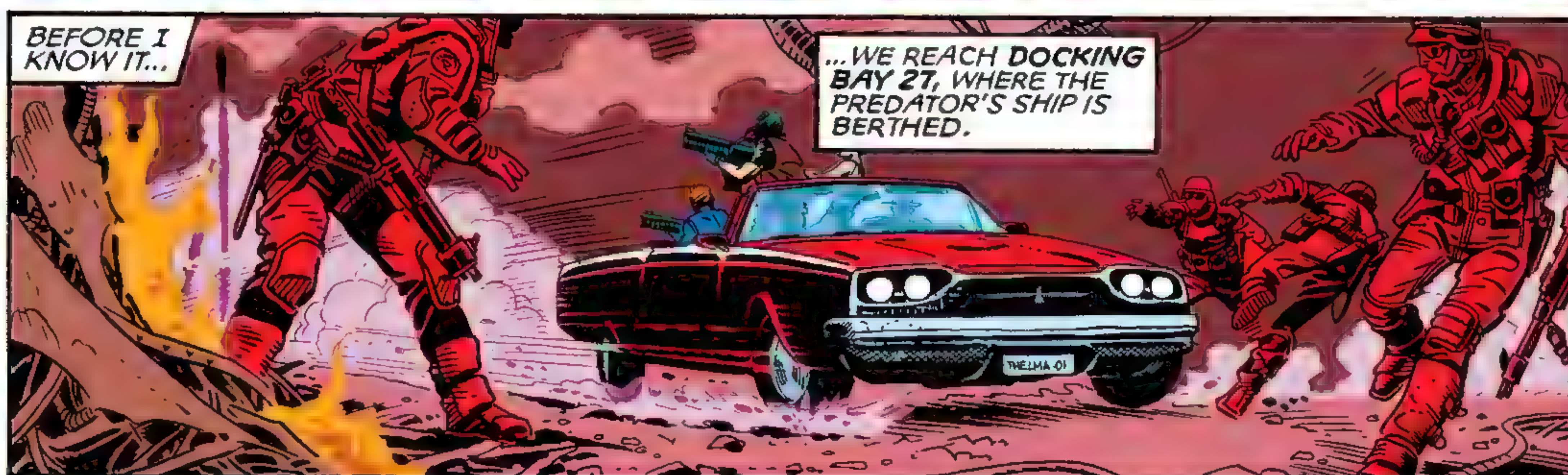
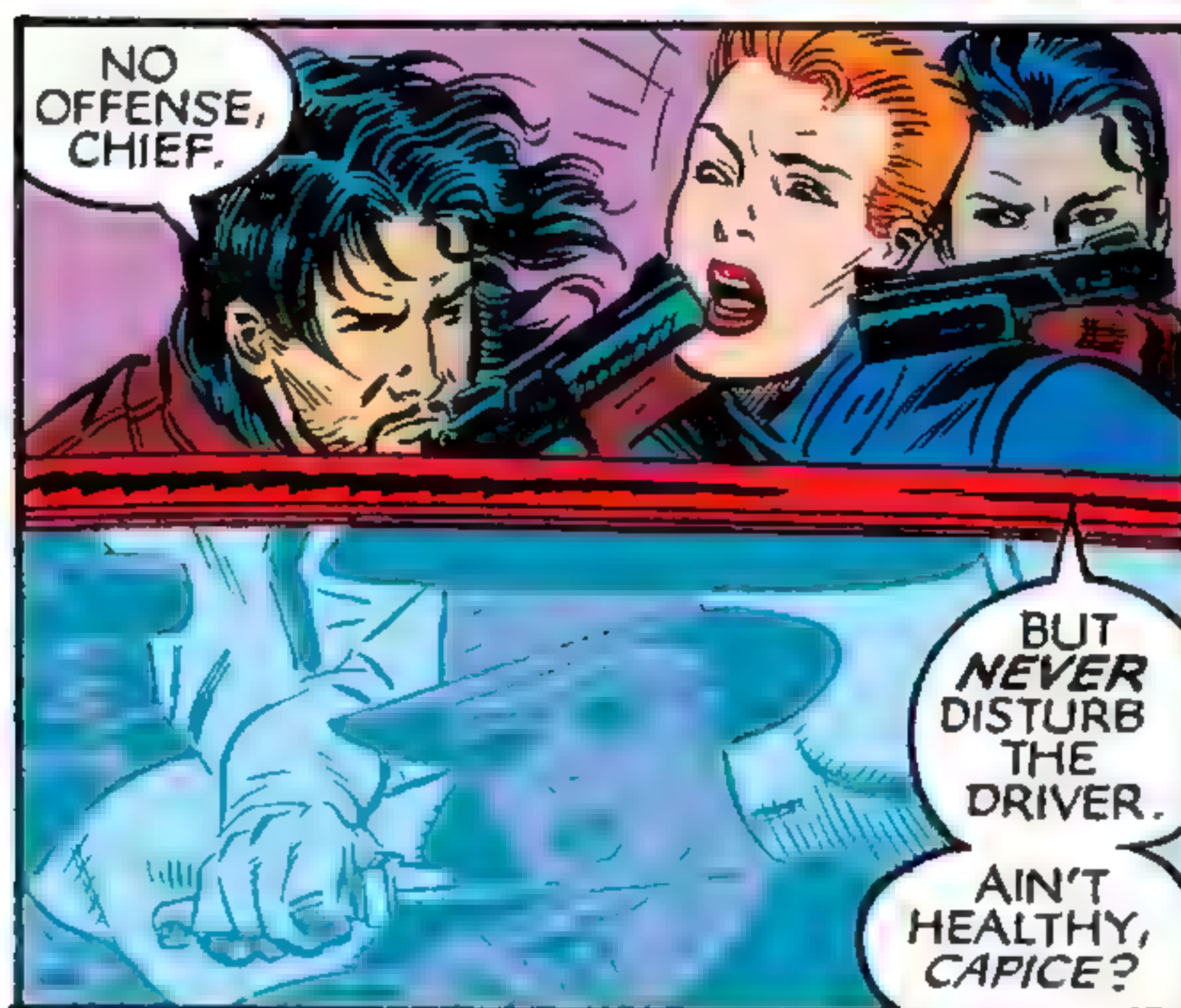
SOMEHOW WE BOTH COME THROUGH WITHOUT A SCRATCH.

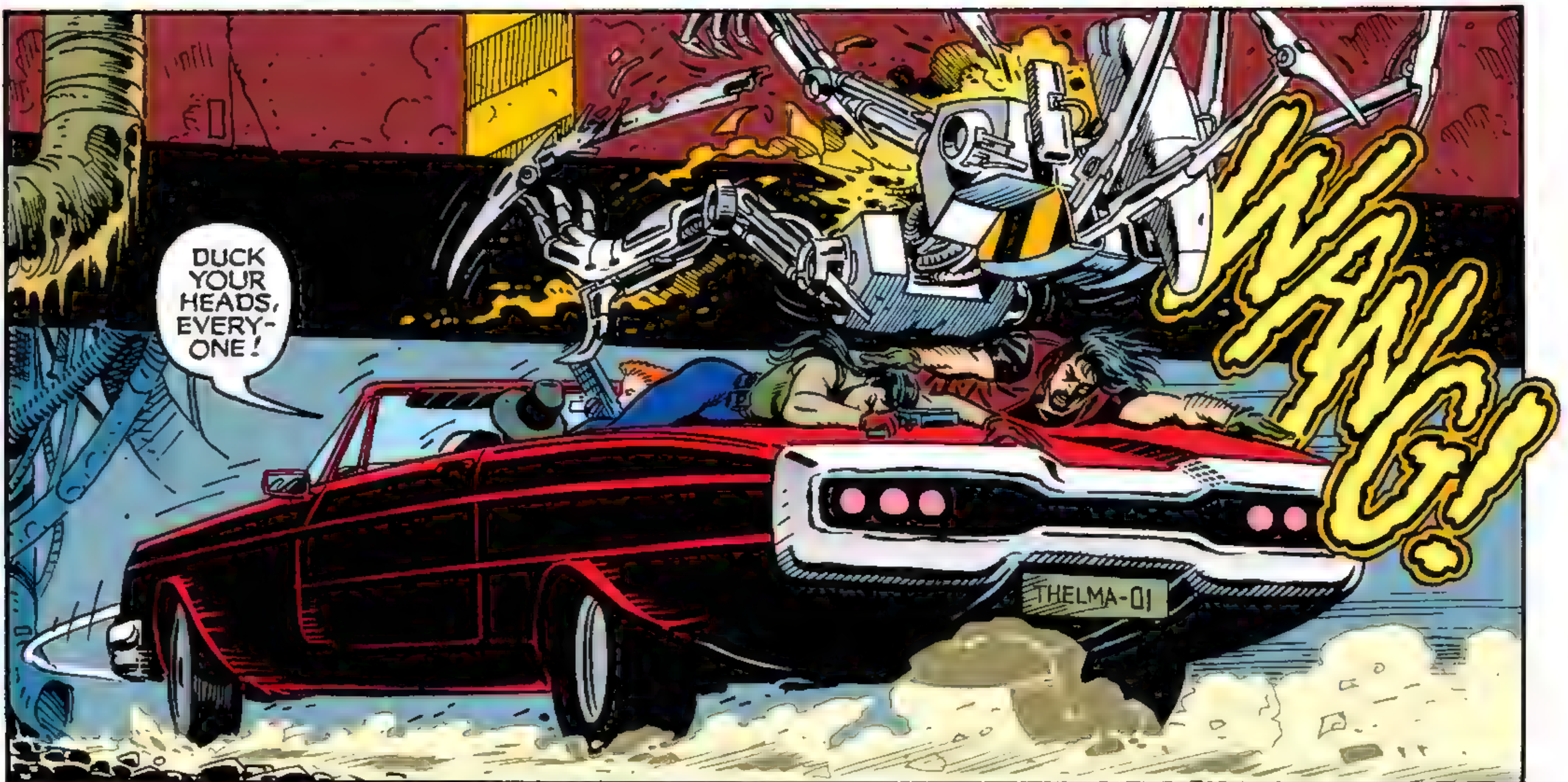
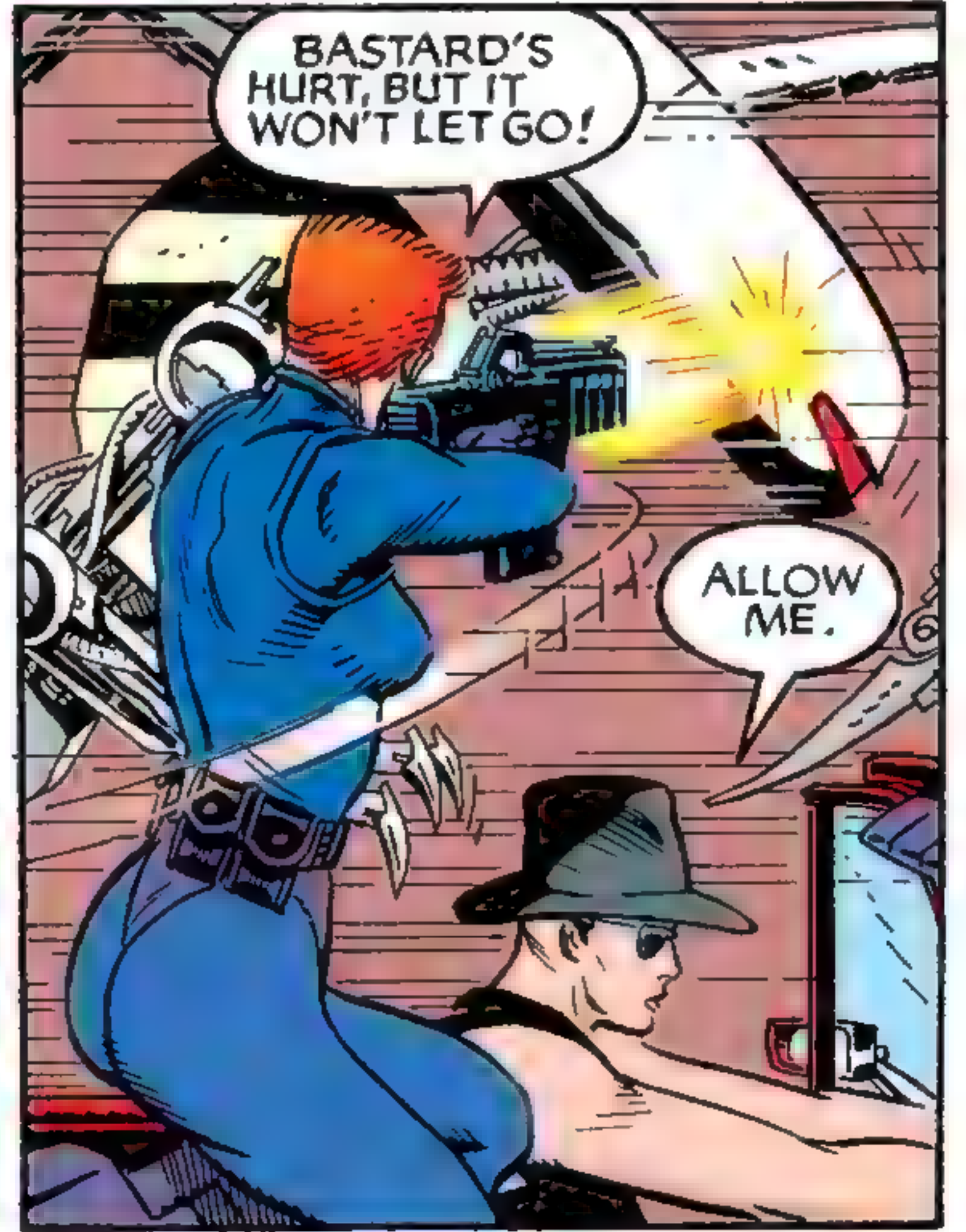
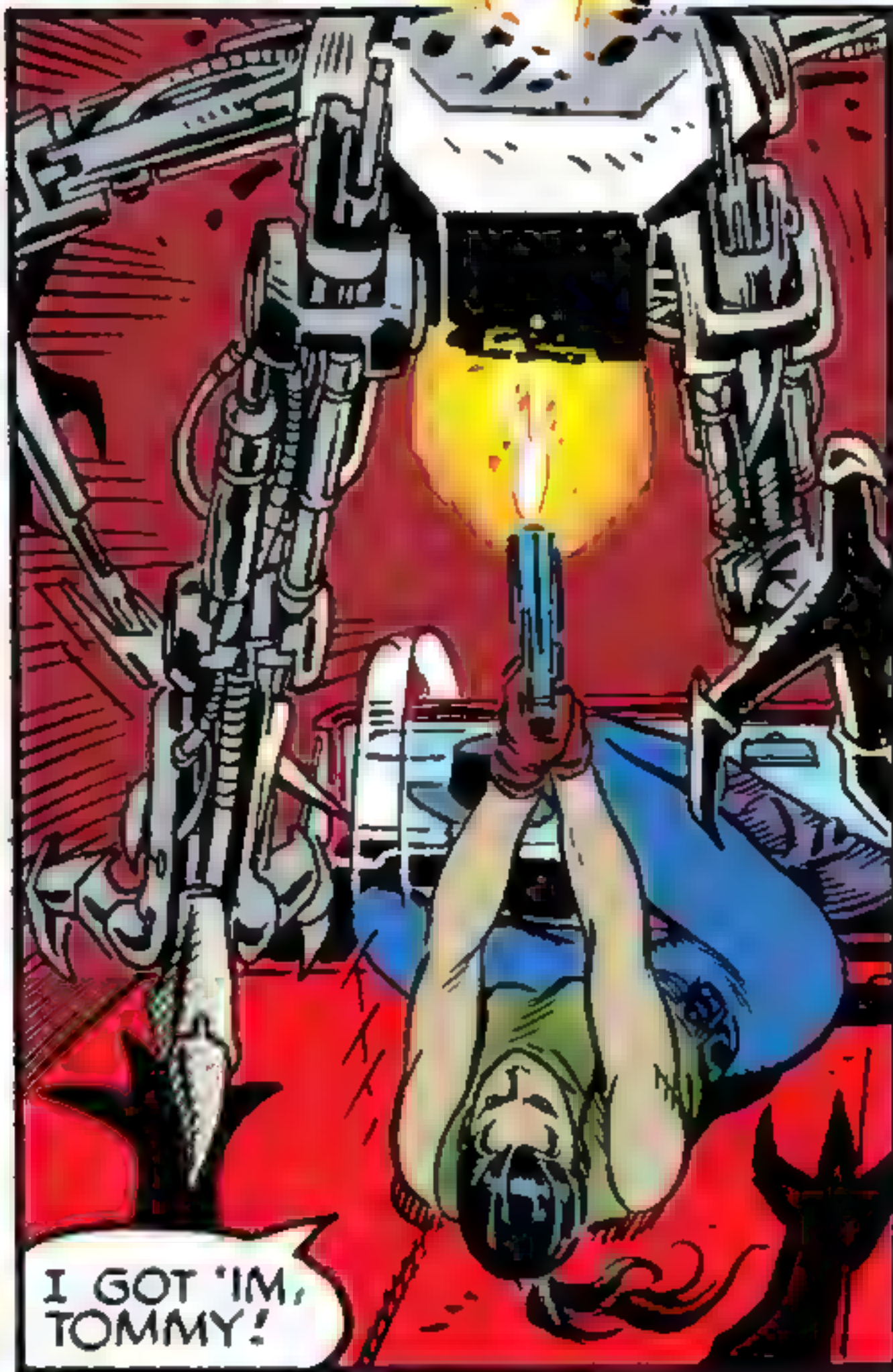
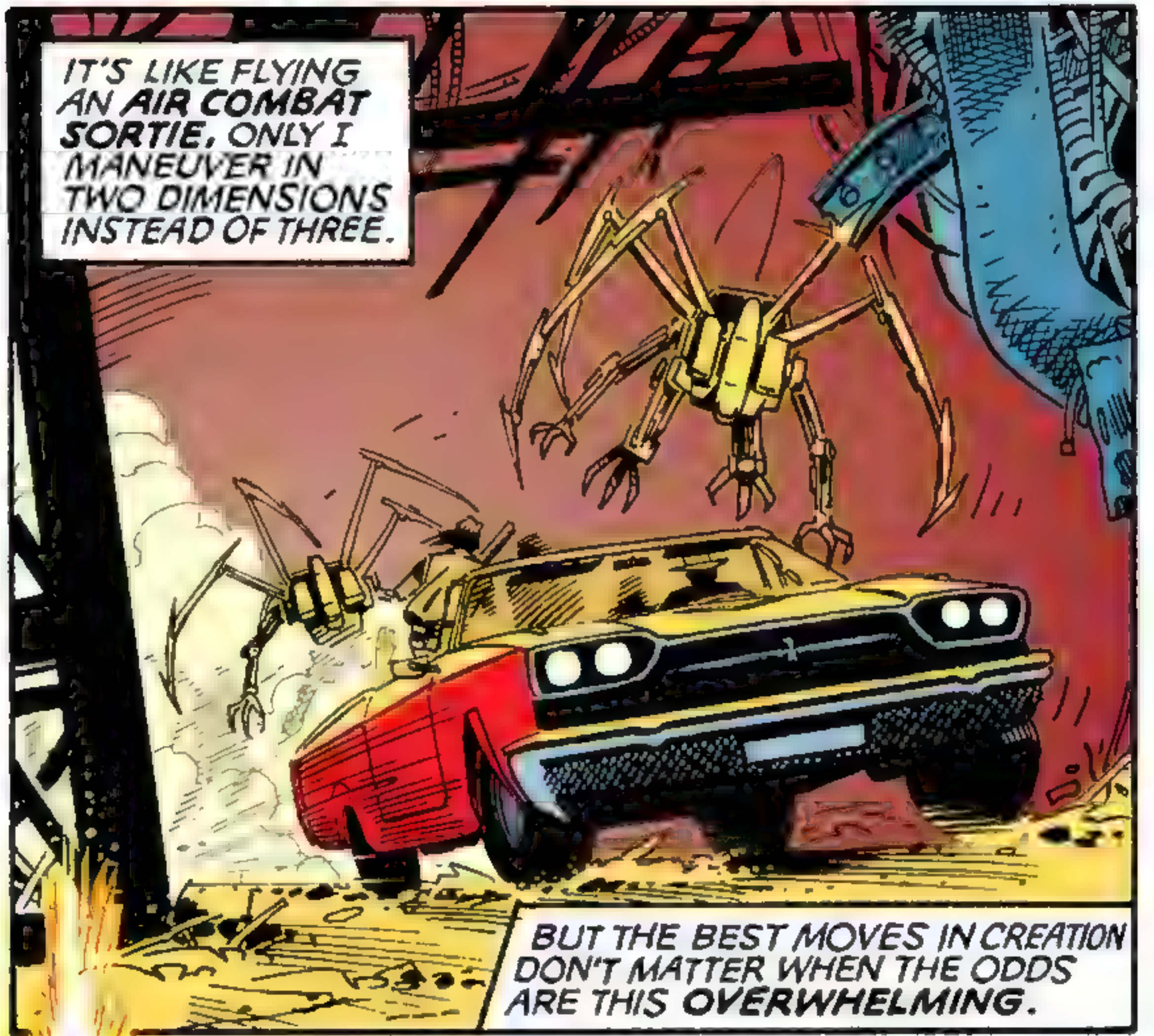


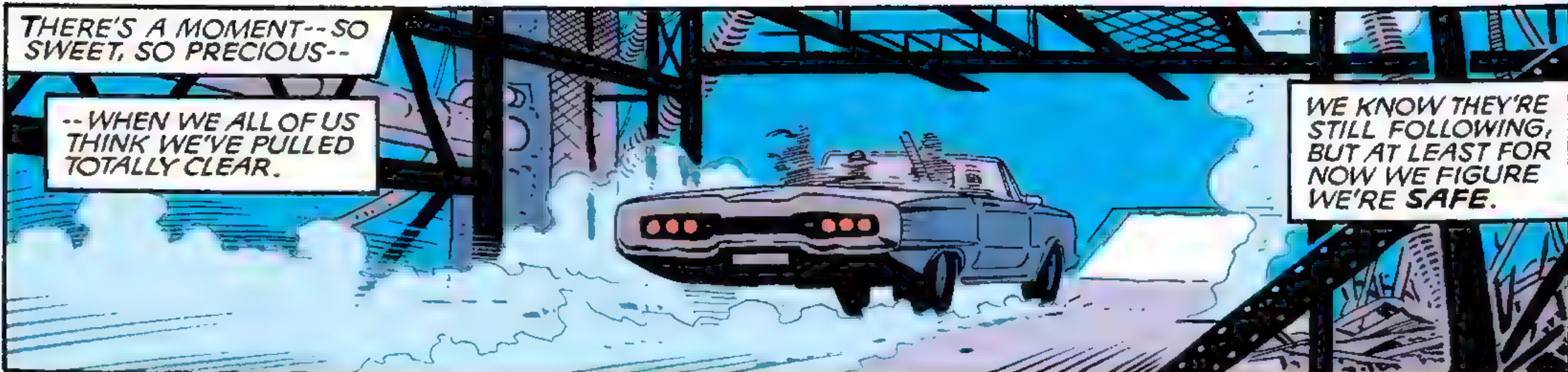
LANDING LIKE THAT COULD MEAN ANYTHING.

I FIGURE TO BE READY FOR THE WORST.





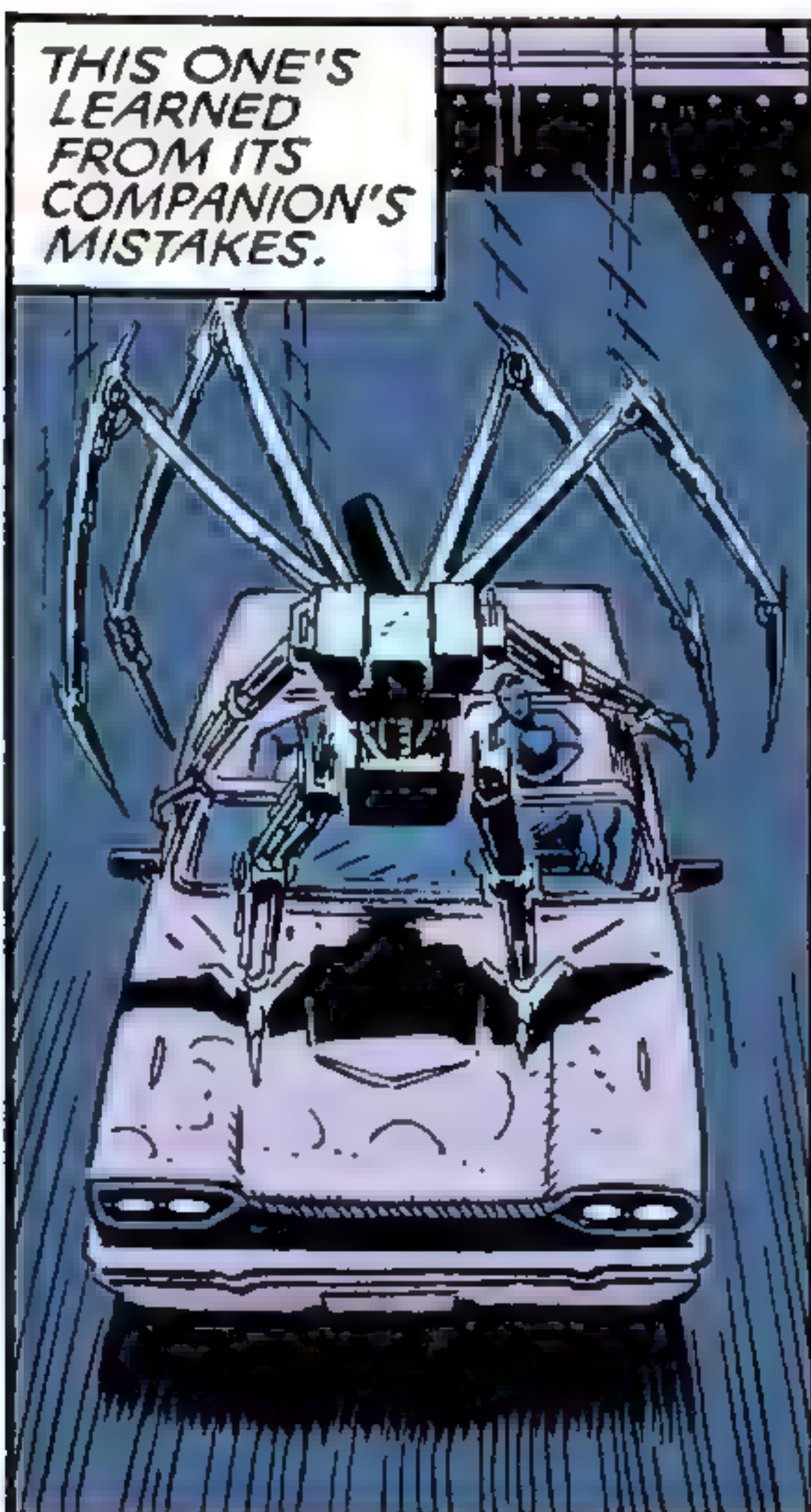




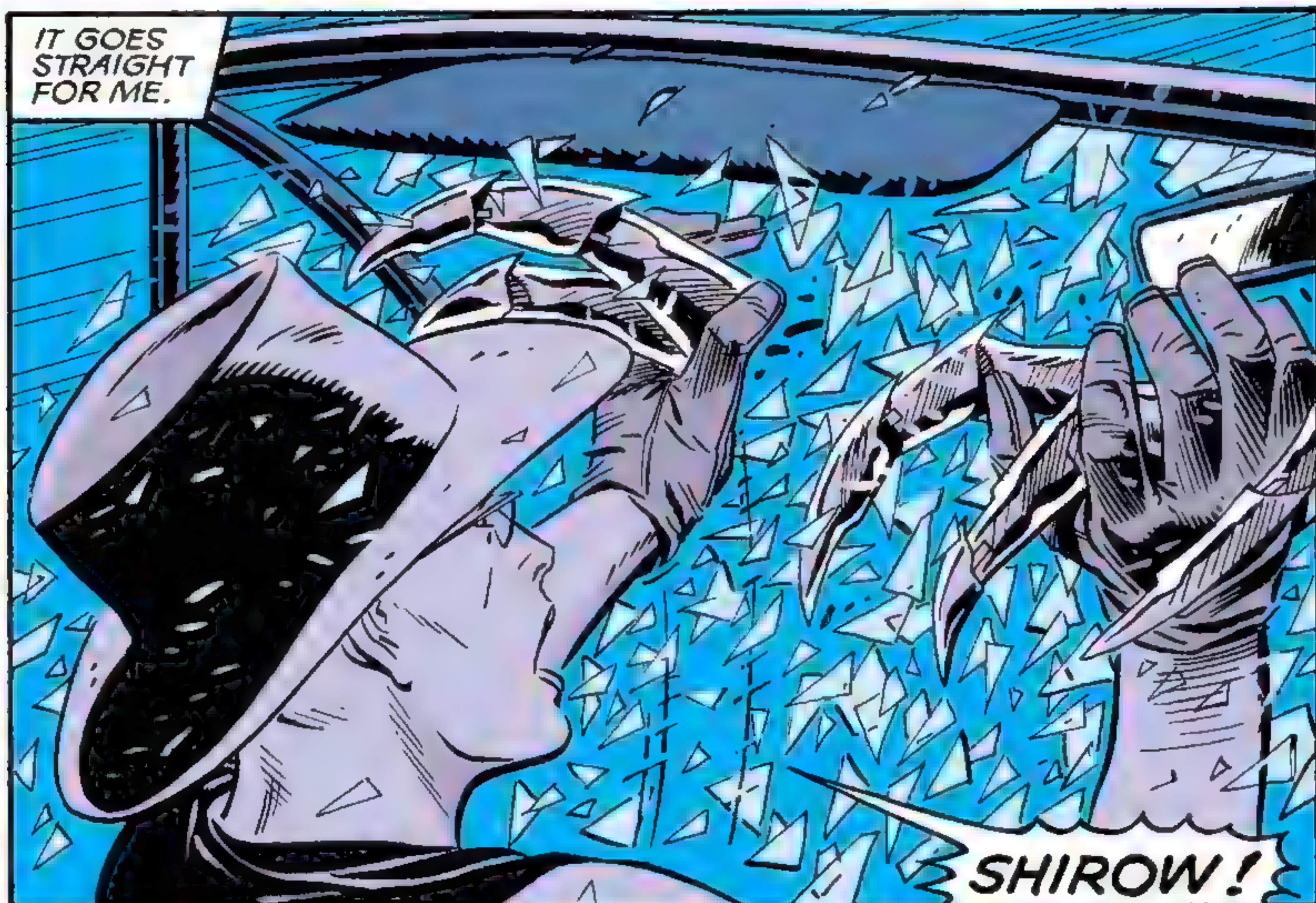
THERE'S A MOMENT--SO SWEET, SO PRECIOUS--

--WHEN WE ALL OF US THINK WE'VE PULLED TOTALLY CLEAR.

WE KNOW THEY'RE STILL FOLLOWING, BUT AT LEAST FOR NOW WE FIGURE WE'RE SAFE.

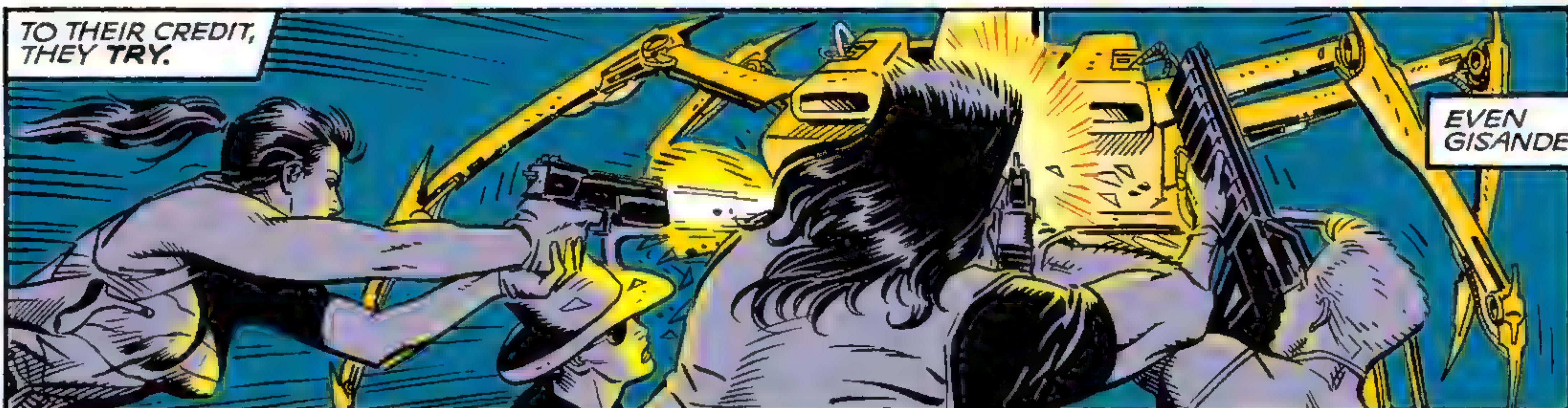


THIS ONE'S LEARNED FROM ITS COMPANION'S MISTAKES.



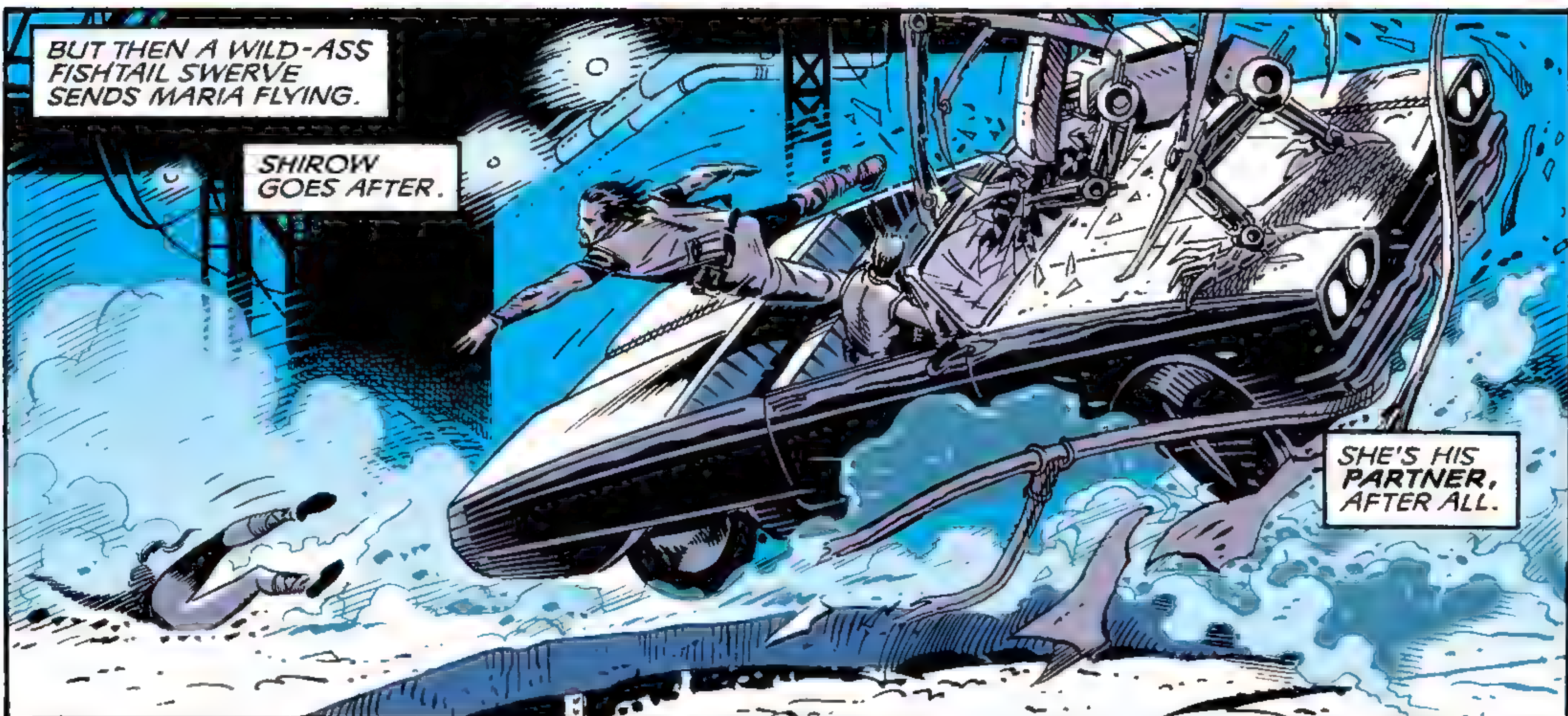
IT GOES STRAIGHT FOR ME.

SHIROW!



TO THEIR CREDIT, THEY TRY.

EVEN GISANDE.



BUT THEN A WILD-ASS FISHTAIL SWERVE SENDS MARIA FLYING.

SHIROW GOES AFTER.

SHE'S HIS PARTNER, AFTER ALL.

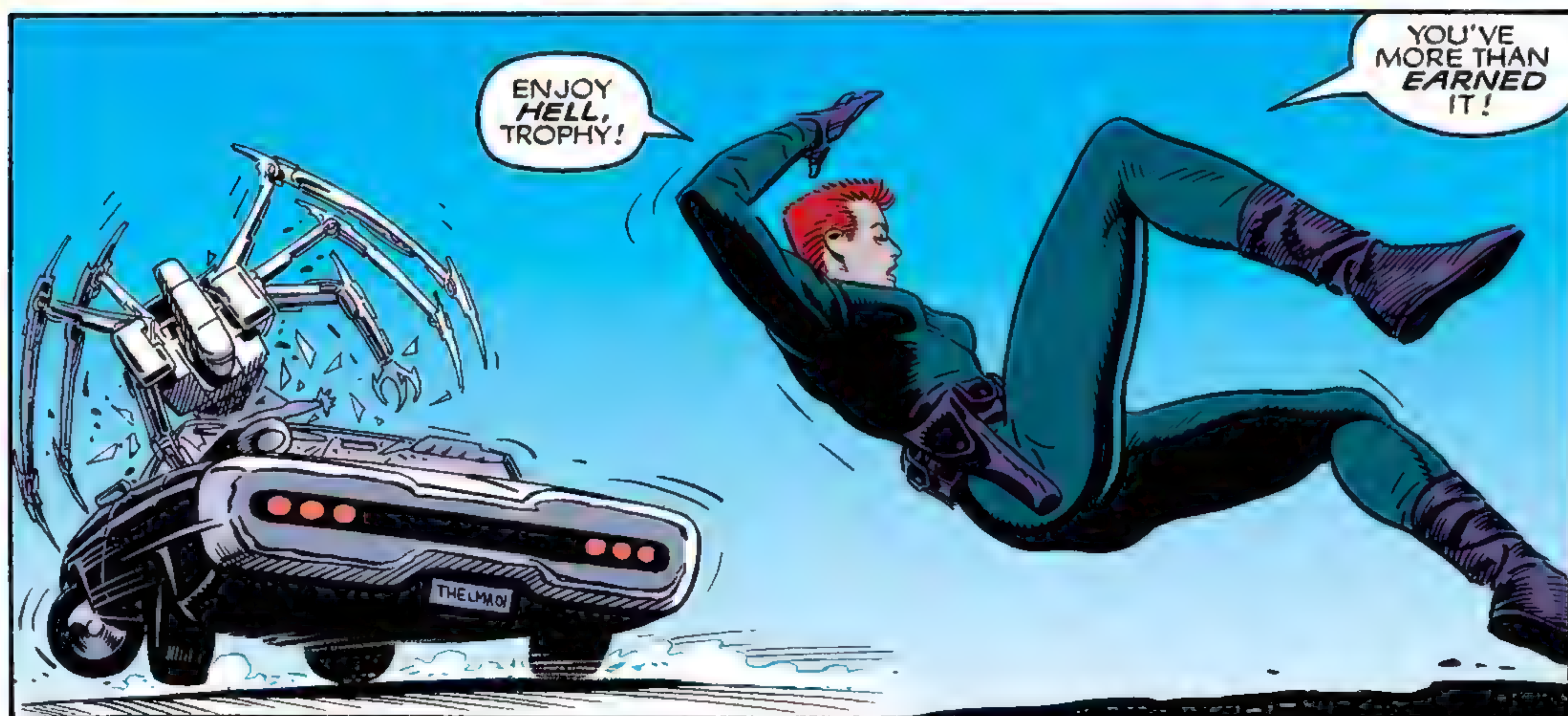
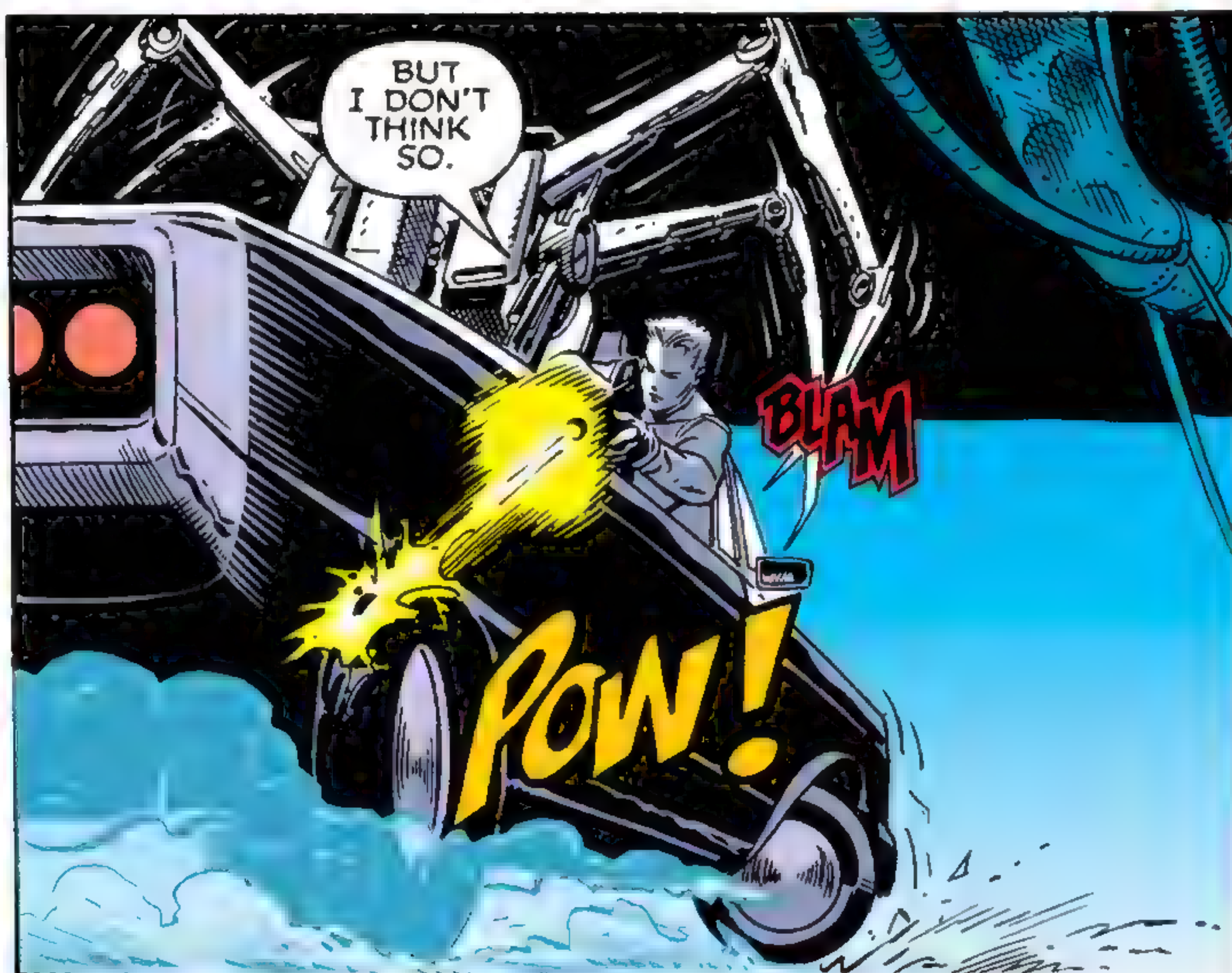
THAT LEAVES JUST GISANDE
AND ME AND THE ROBOT.

SOMEHOW, I KEEP
FROM CRASHING.

BUT ONCE THE
ROBOT PROPERLY
ANCHORS
ITSELF AGAIN--
END OF STORY.

FOR THE
LOVE OF GOD,
GISANDE--

--KILL
IT!





SMELL

SMOKE...
MIXED WITH
SOMETHING...
ELSE.

EMERGENCY
PROCEDURES--
SEAL THE VENTS,
SEAL THE HATCHES,
BLEED ATMOSPHERE
FROM THE AFFECTED
SPACES TO SUFFOCATE
THE BLAZE, ALL
PERSONNEL TO PRESSURE
SUITS, SUPPRESSION
TEAMS IN HARD ARMOR,
MAKE SURE IT DOESN'T
SPREAD, THEN KILL
IT DEAD.

FIRE IS THE
DEMON.

THAT'S
WHAT I WAS
TAUGHT.

I'VE LEARNED
DIFFERENT,
SINCE.

I WAS
RUNNING...

...THERE WAS
SHOOTING--

--THE
CAR--

--THE
OTHERS?!?

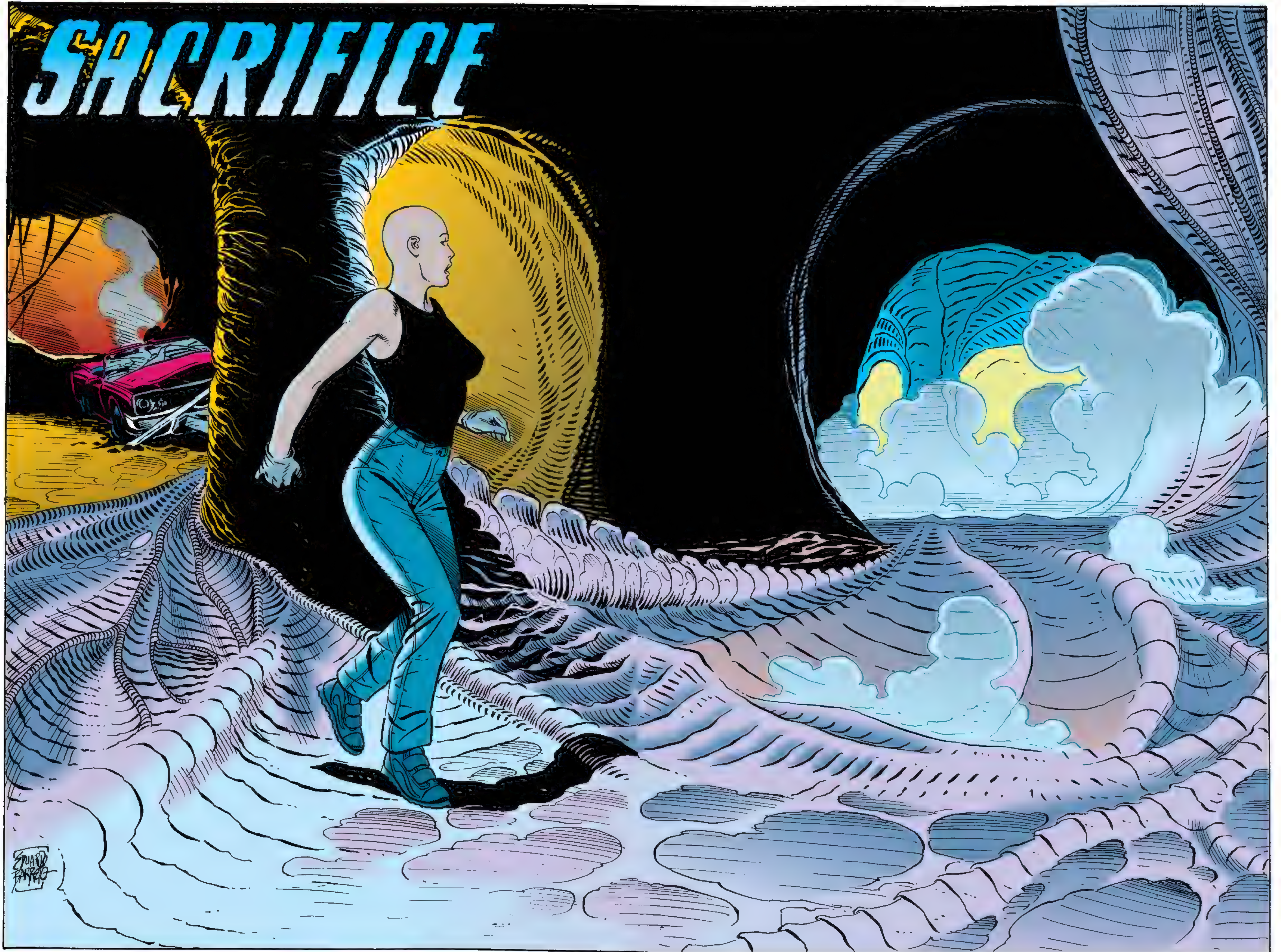
Ok.

Ok!

OW!!

WHAT
HAPPENED?

SACRIFICE





A
NEST!

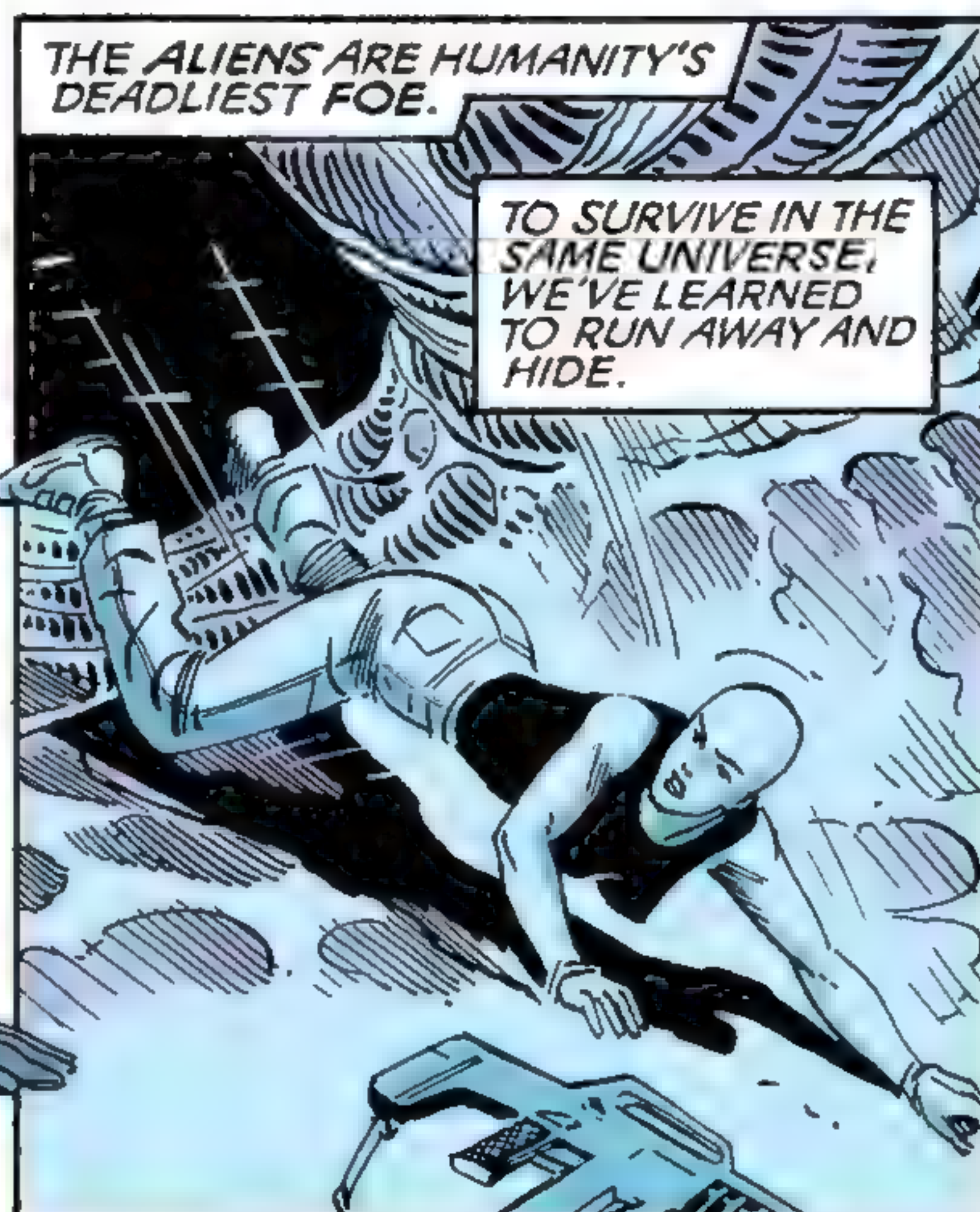
LORD HAVE
MERCY,
IT'S A

NEST!!



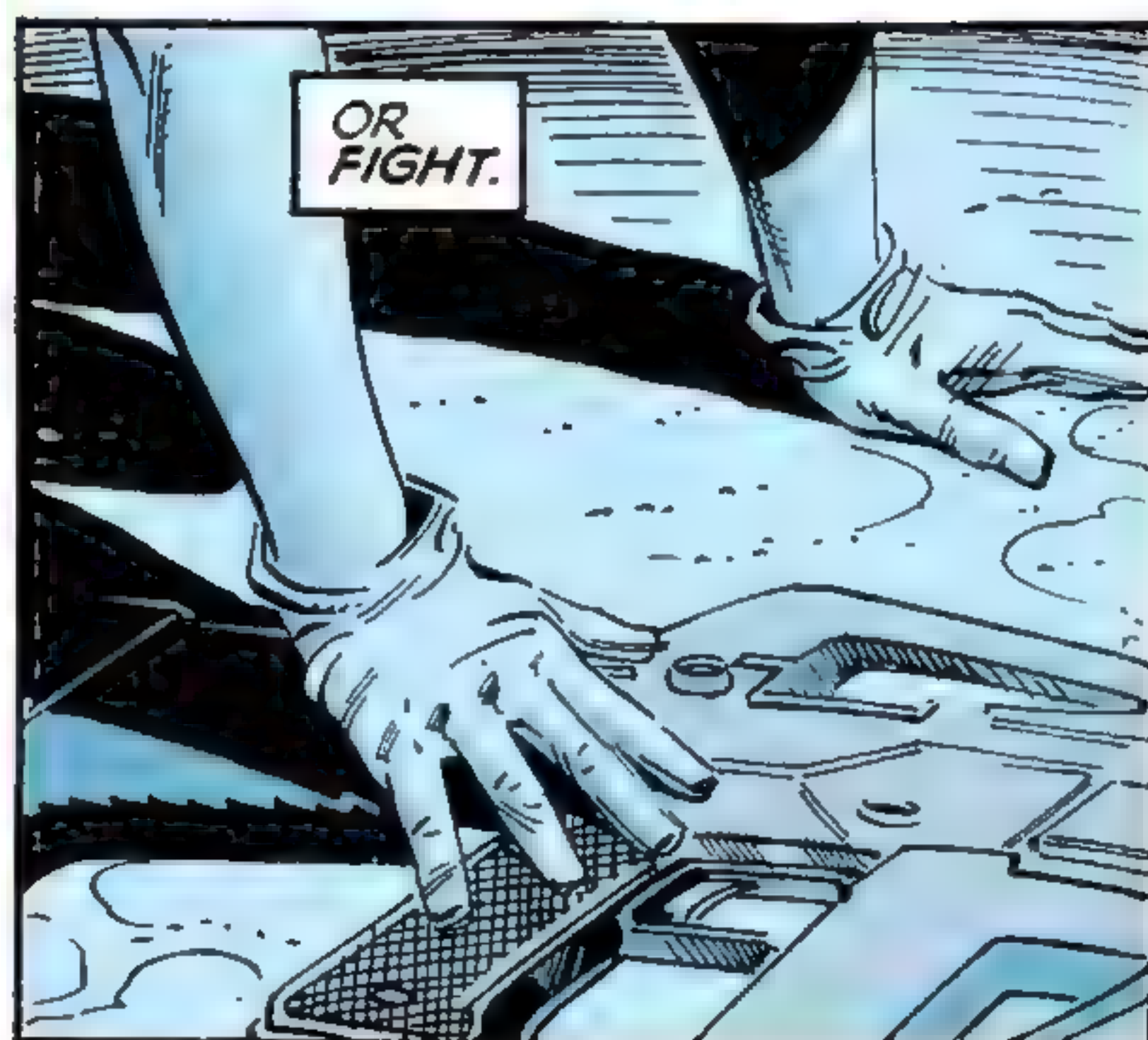
I CAN'T HELP MYSELF
FOR SCREAMING.

IT'S A
CONDITIONING
BRED INTO OUR
SOULS BY THE
ULTIMATE
IN NATURAL
SELECTION.

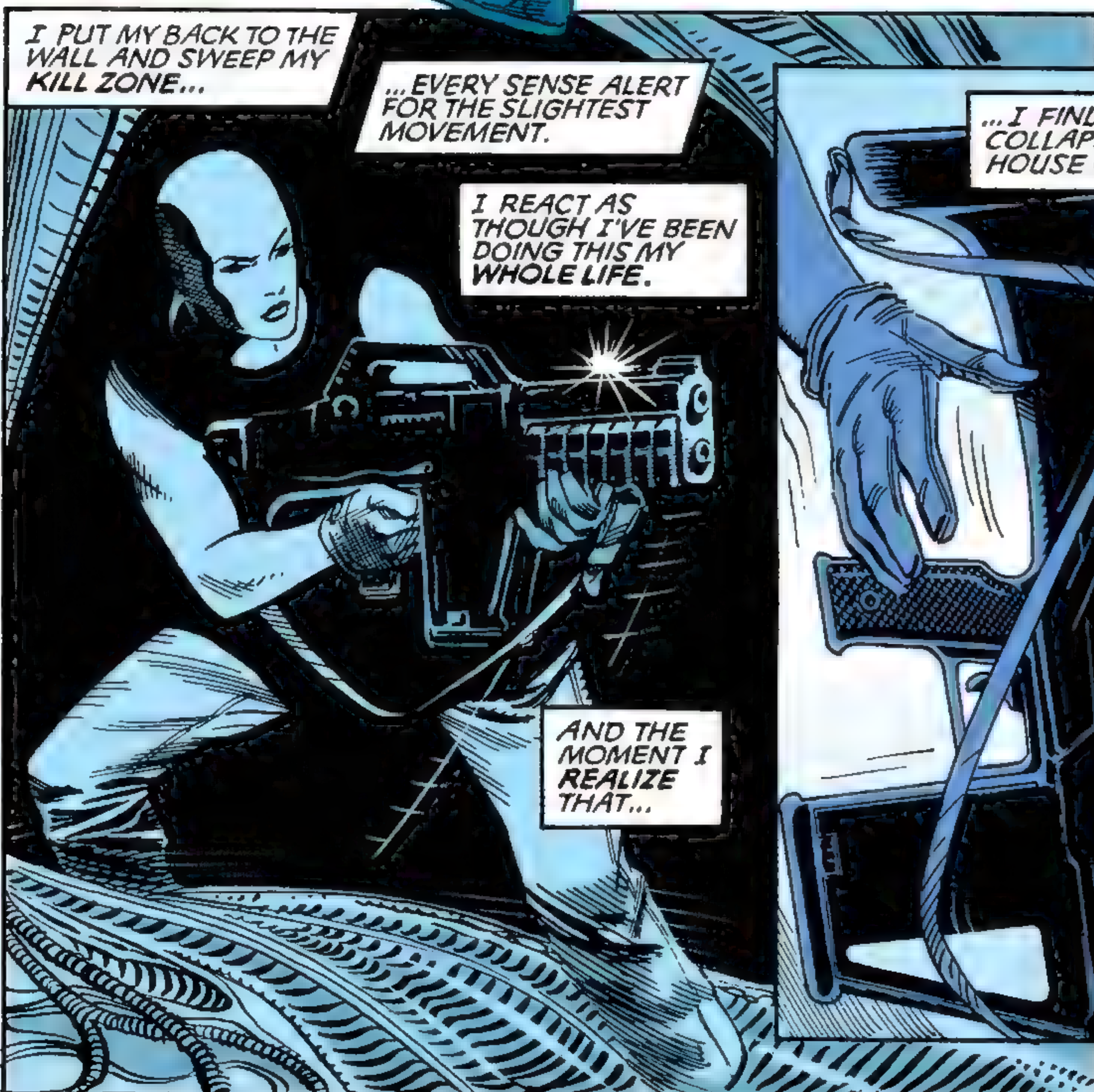


THE ALIENS ARE HUMANITY'S
DEADLIEST FOE.

TO SURVIVE IN THE
SAME UNIVERSE,
WE'VE LEARNED
TO RUN AWAY AND
HIDE.



OR
FIGHT.

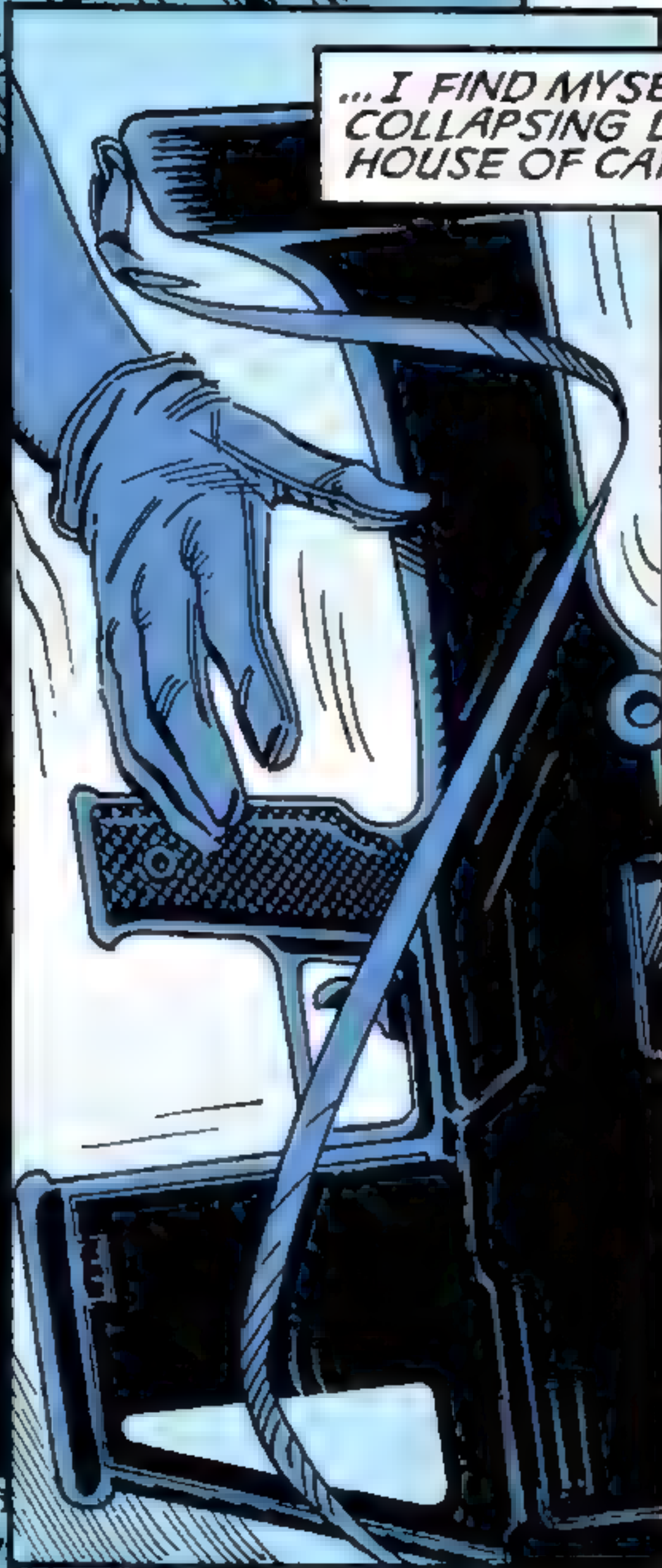


I PUT MY BACK TO THE
WALL AND SWEEP MY
KILL ZONE...

...EVERY SENSE ALERT
FOR THE SLIGHTEST
MOVEMENT.

I REACT AS
THOUGH I'VE BEEN
DOING THIS MY
WHOLE LIFE.

AND THE
MOMENT I
REALIZE
THAT...



...I FIND MYSELF
COLLAPSING LIKE A
HOUSE OF CARDS.



NO!

NO
NO NO
NO NO
NO

BECAUSE
AS RIGHT
AND
NATURAL
AS ALL
THESE
INSTINCTS
FEEL...

...I ALSO
KNOW
THEY HAVE
TO BE A
LIE.



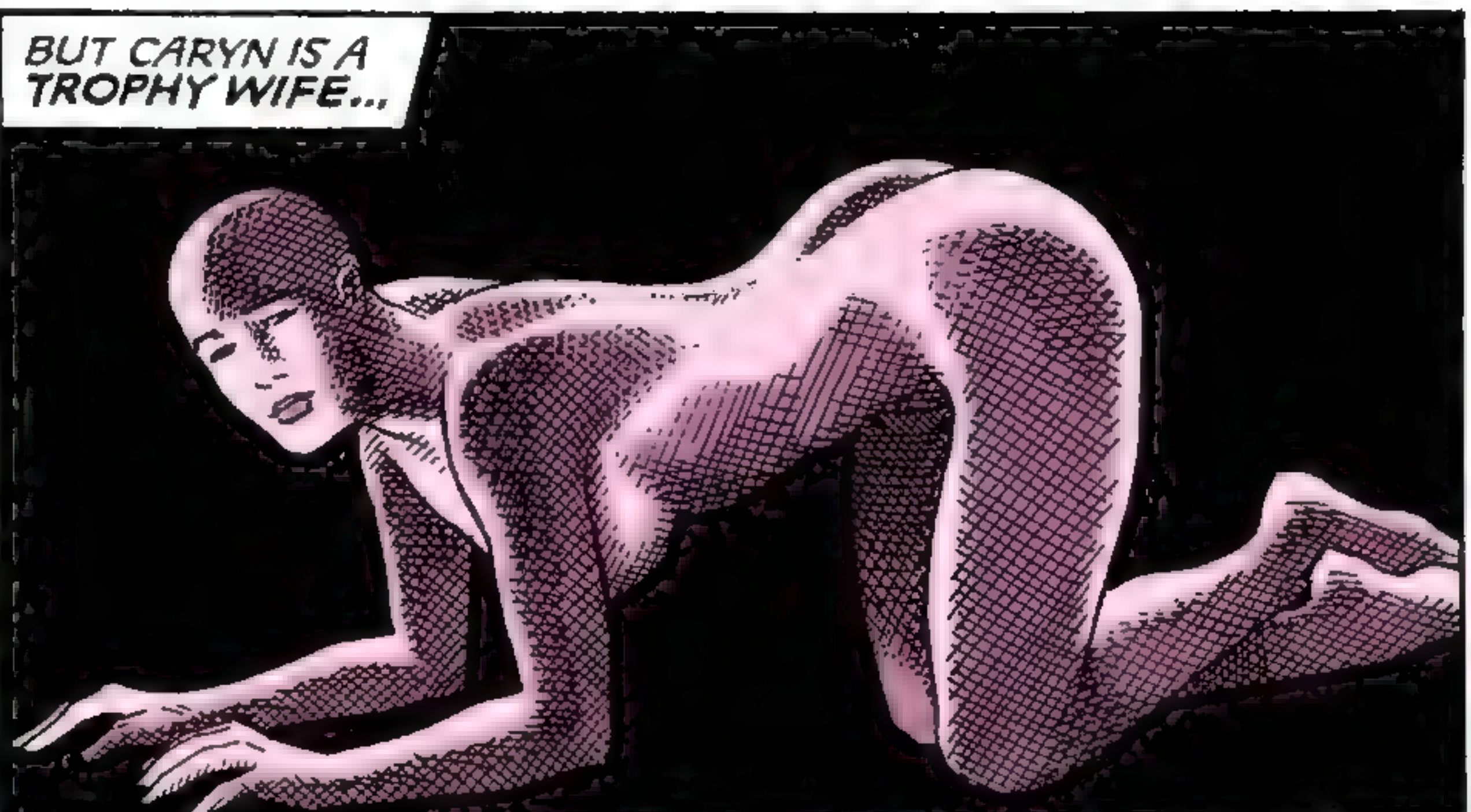
I'M CARYN DELACROIX!

THAT'S THE CENTRAL REALITY OF MY EXISTENCE.

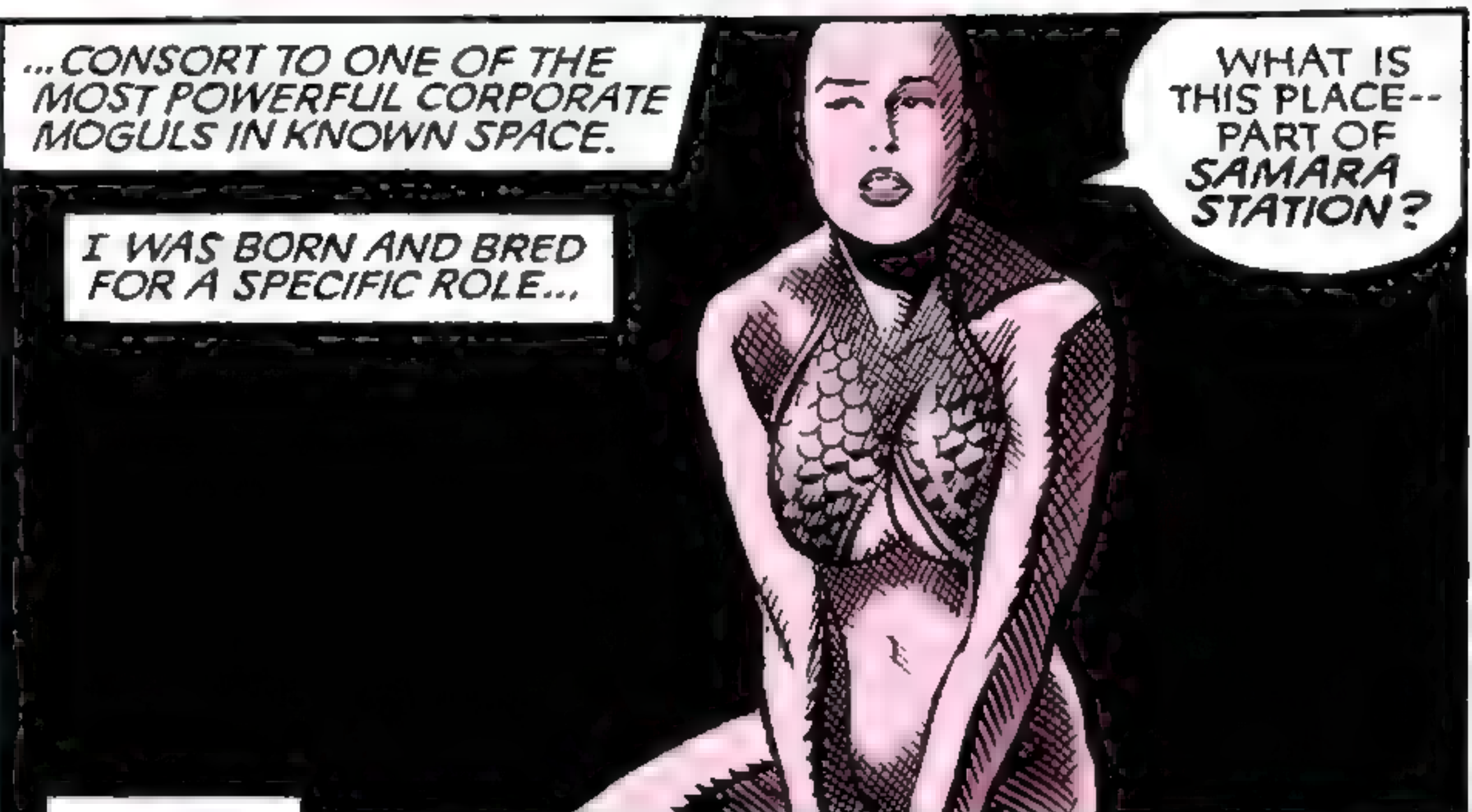
OF MY VERY BEING.

Whua ?!!

NO!



BUT CARYN IS A TROPHY WIFE...



...CONSORT TO ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL CORPORATE MOGULS IN KNOWN SPACE.

I WAS BORN AND BRED FOR A SPECIFIC ROLE...

WHAT IS THIS PLACE-- PART OF SAMARA STATION?



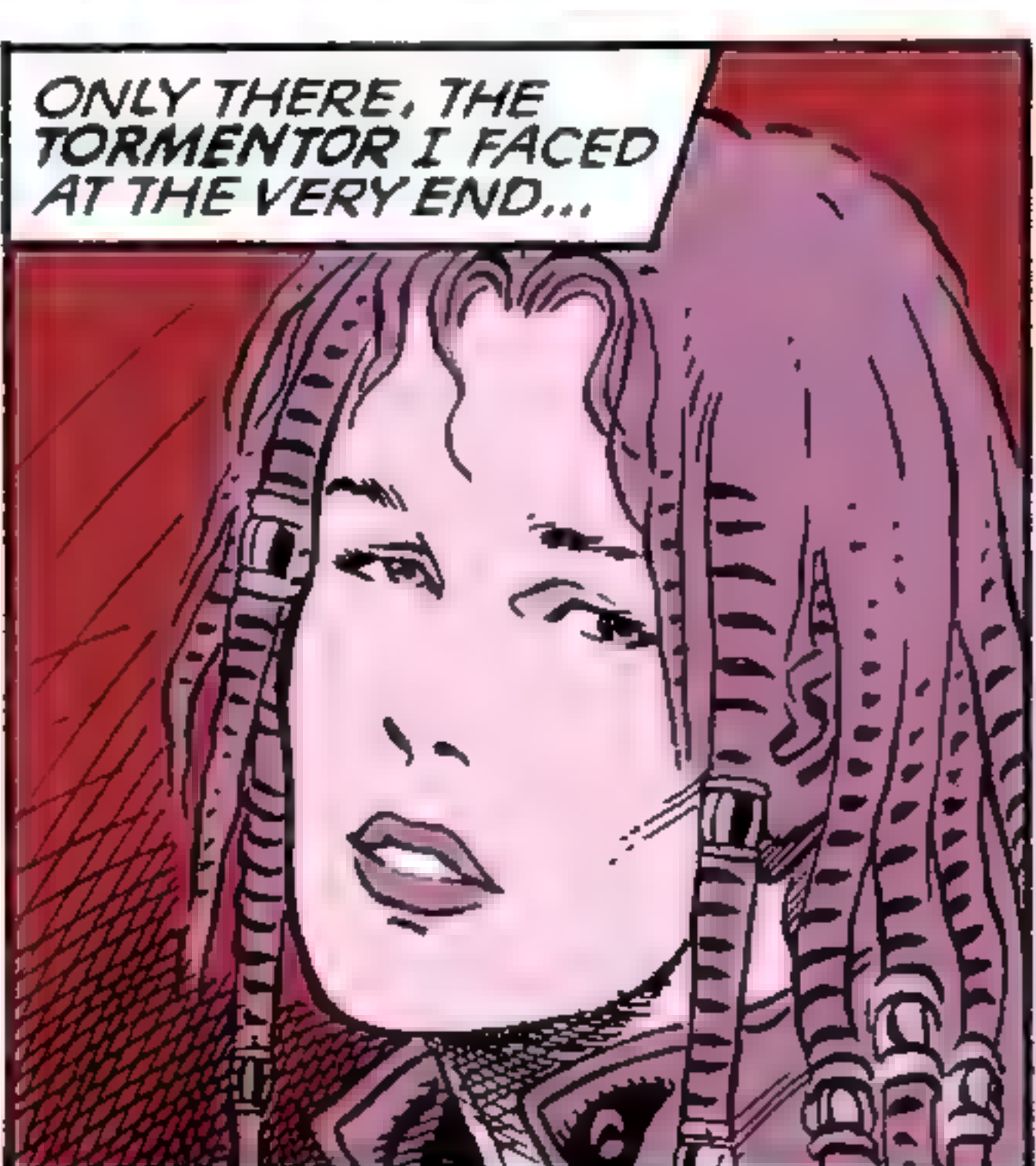
...AND IT WASN'T COMBAT.

TOO DARK TO TELL.

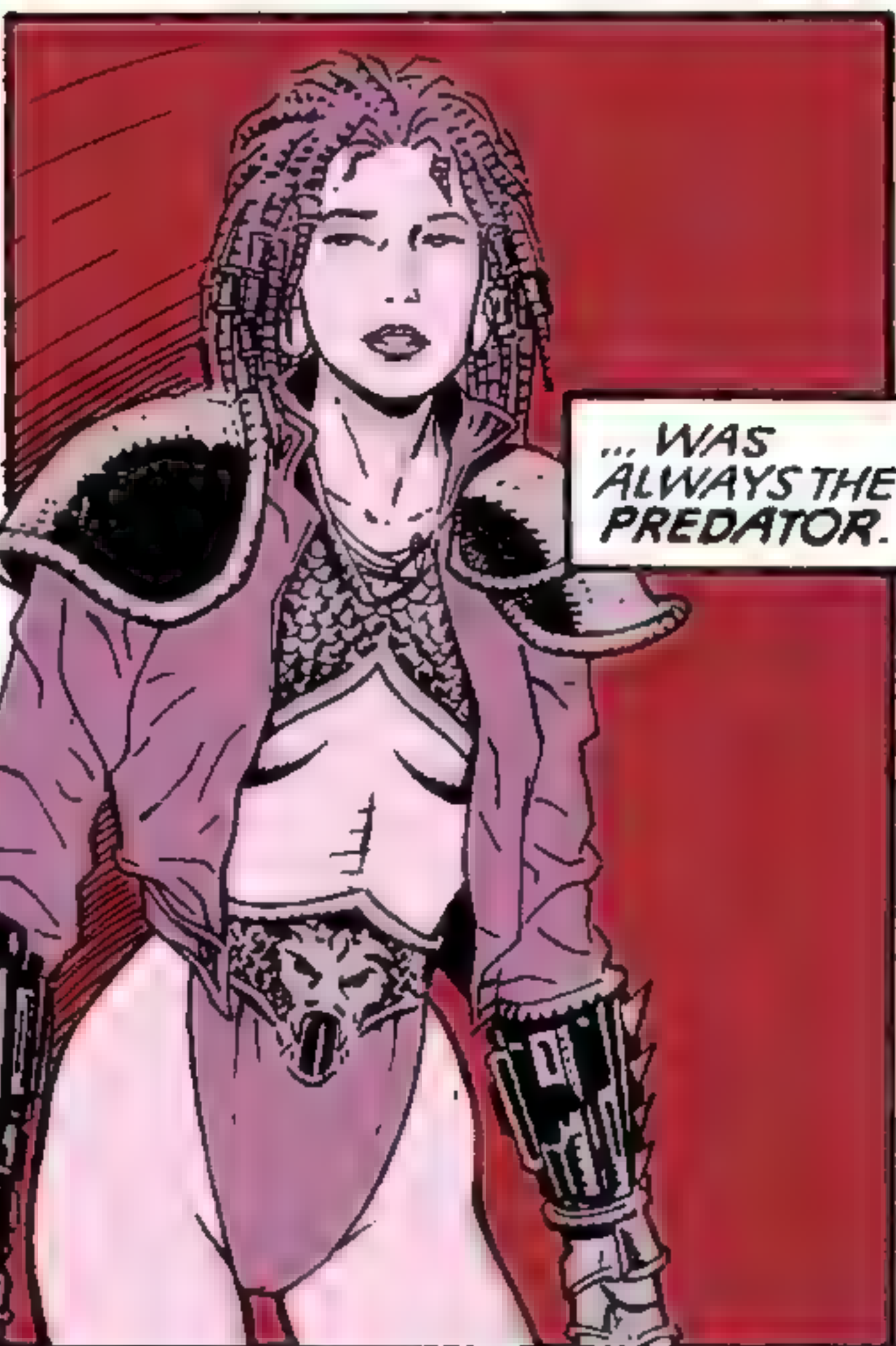
FLOOR'S DAMP UNDERFOOT...

...AND THE SMELL!

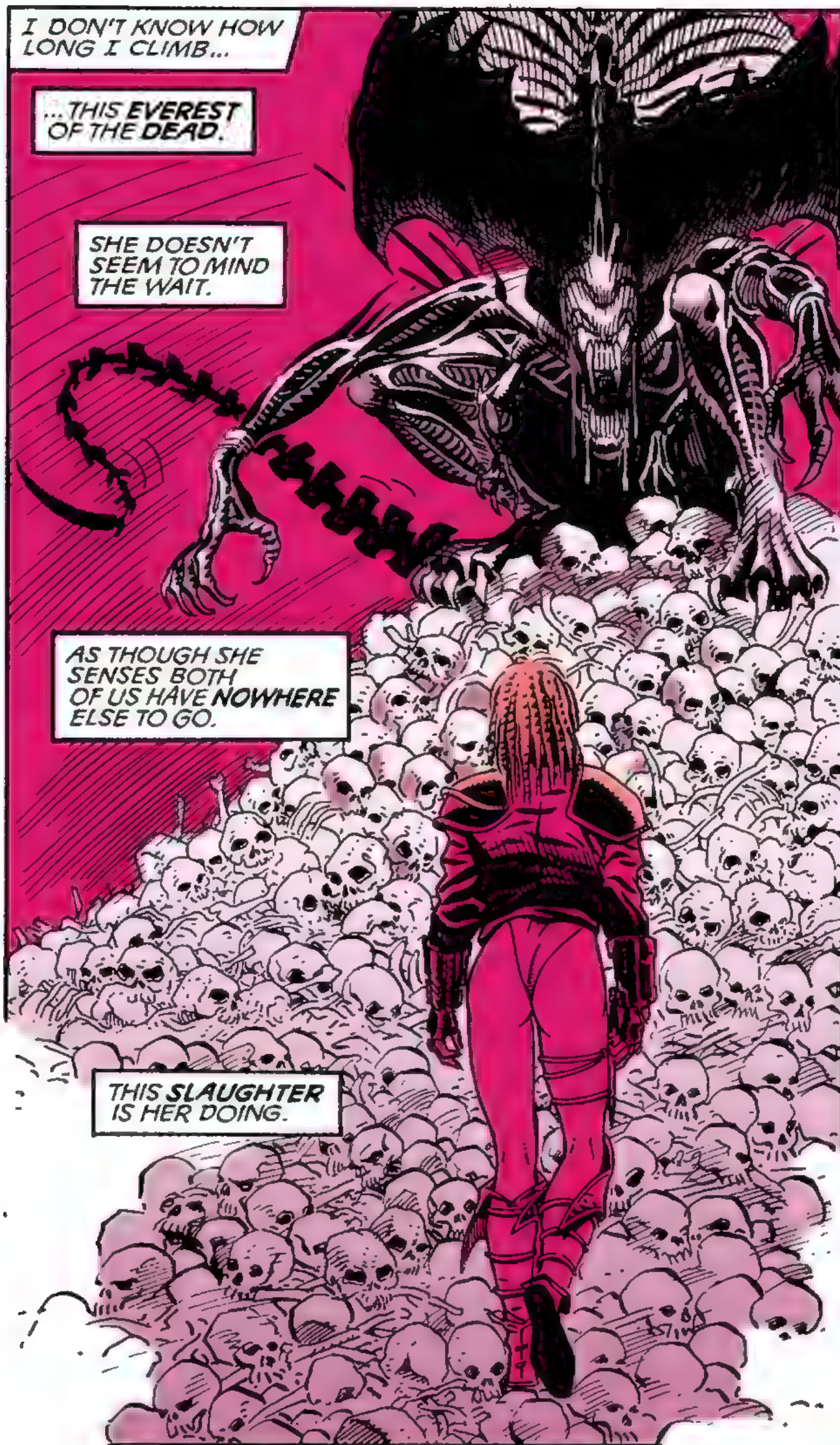
I REMEMBER IT FROM MY DREAMS!



ONLY THERE, THE TORMENTOR I FACED AT THE VERY END...



... WAS ALWAYS THE PREDATOR.



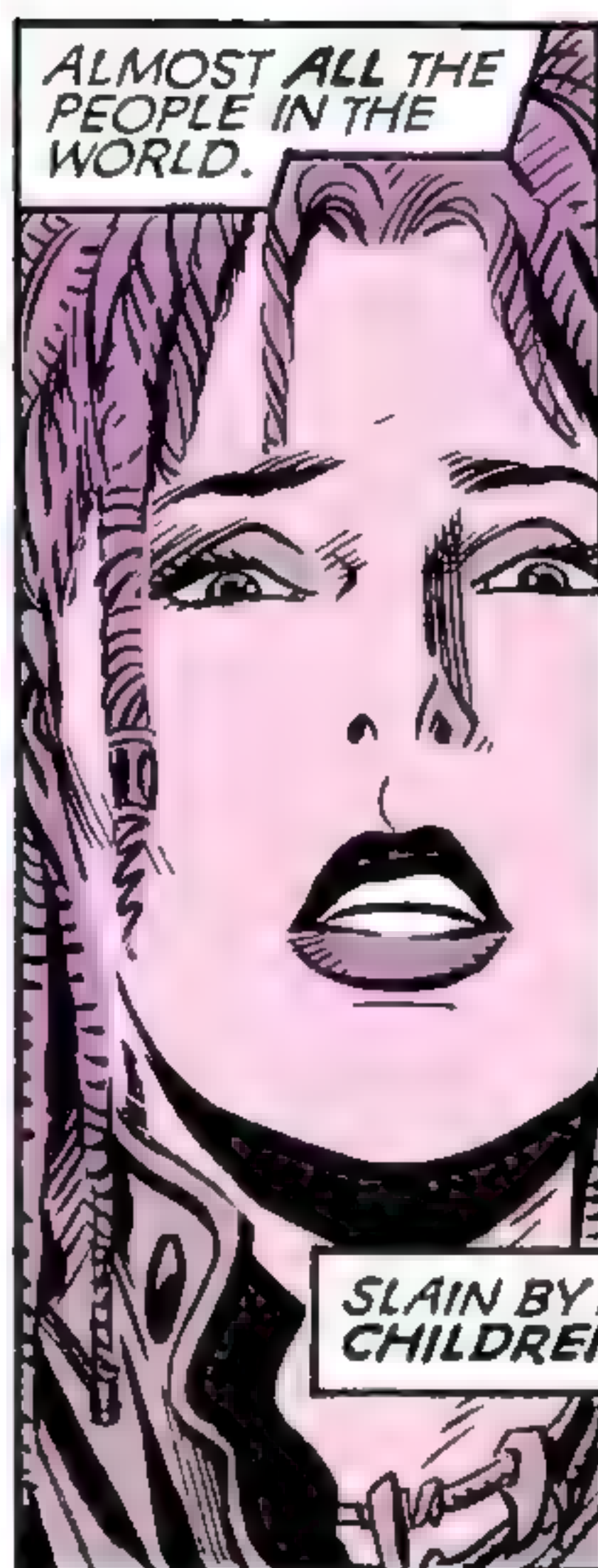
I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I CLIMB...

...THIS EVEREST OF THE DEAD.

SHE DOESN'T SEEM TO MIND THE WAIT.

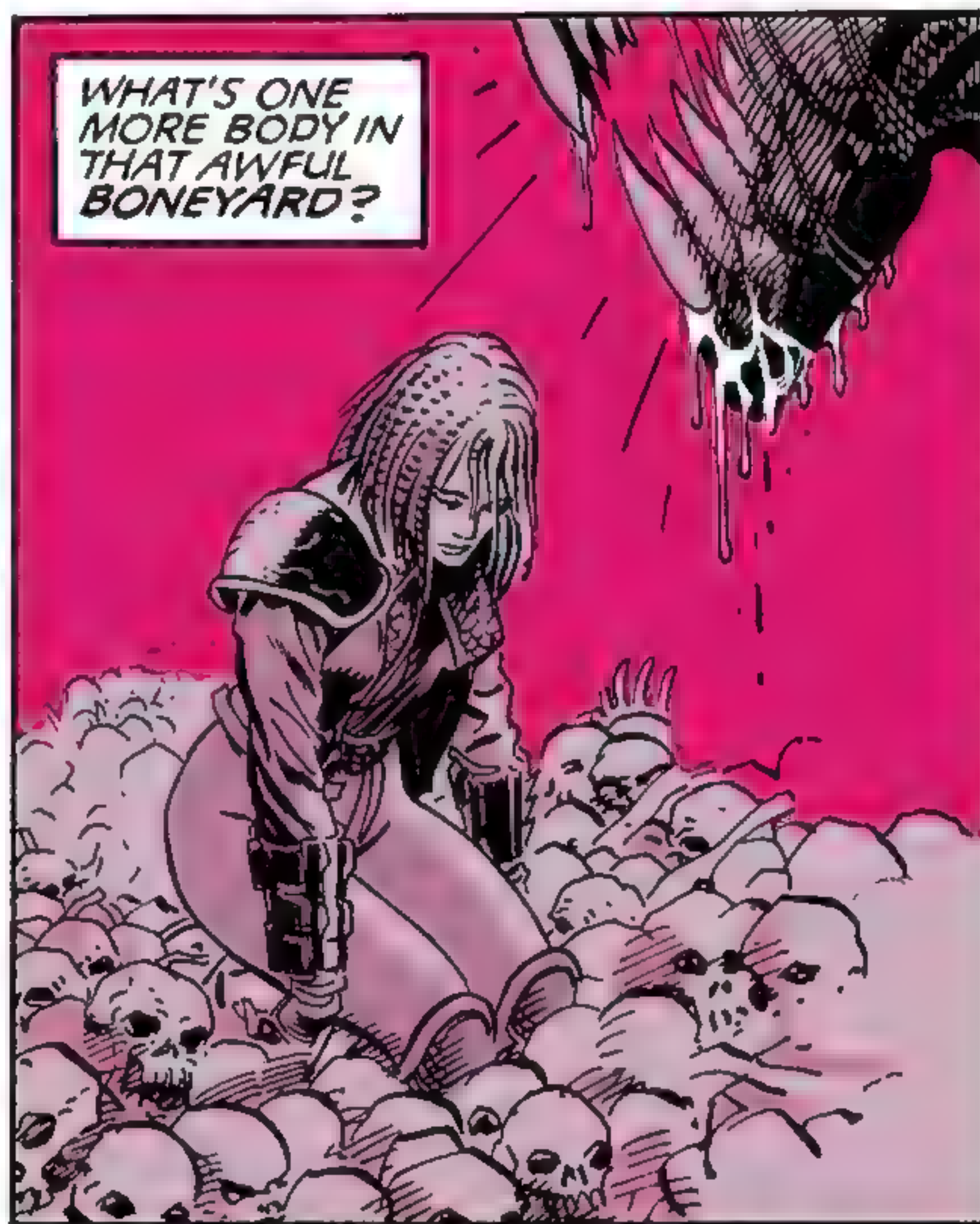
AS THOUGH SHE SENSES BOTH OF US HAVE NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.

THIS SLAUGHTER IS HER DOING.

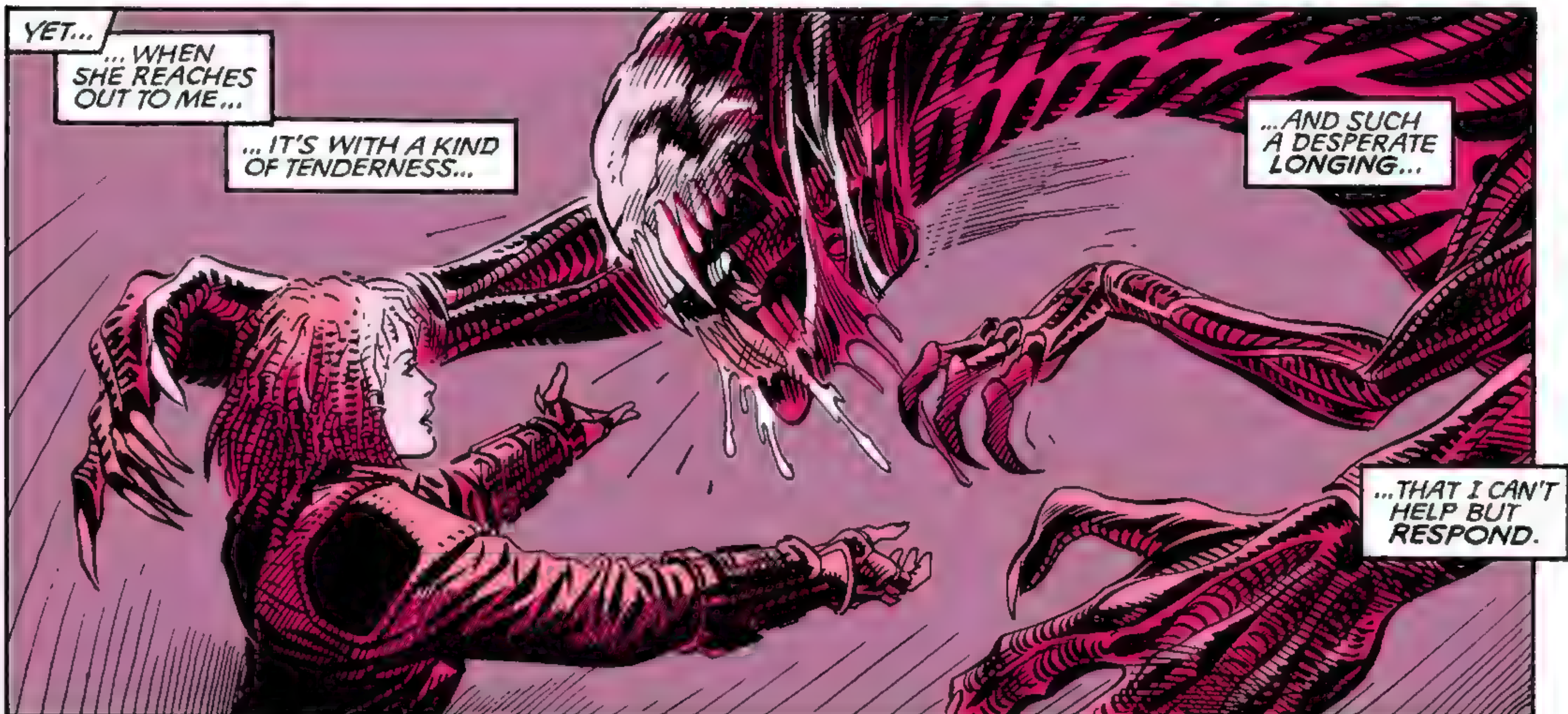


ALMOST ALL THE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD.

SLAIN BY HER CHILDREN.



WHAT'S ONE MORE BODY IN THAT AWFUL BONEYARD?



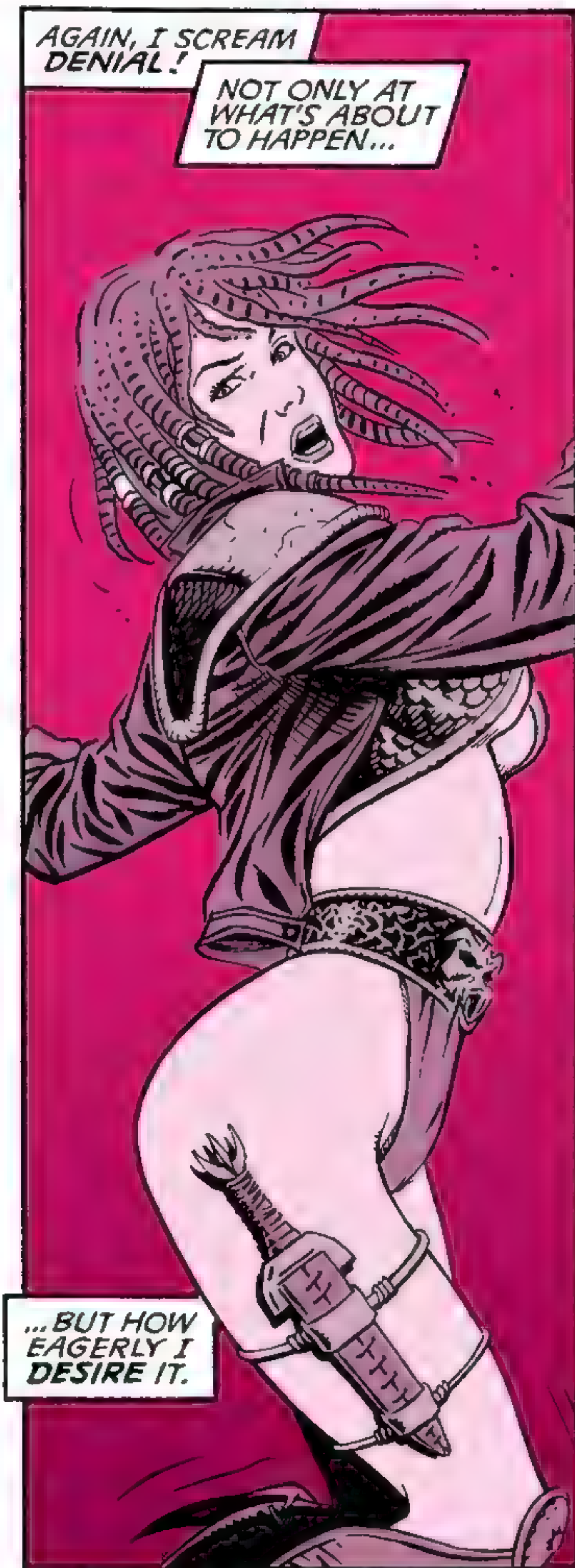
YET...

... WHEN SHE REACHES OUT TO ME...

... IT'S WITH A KIND OF TENDERNESS...

... AND SUCH A DESPERATE LONGING...

... THAT I CAN'T HELP BUT RESPOND.



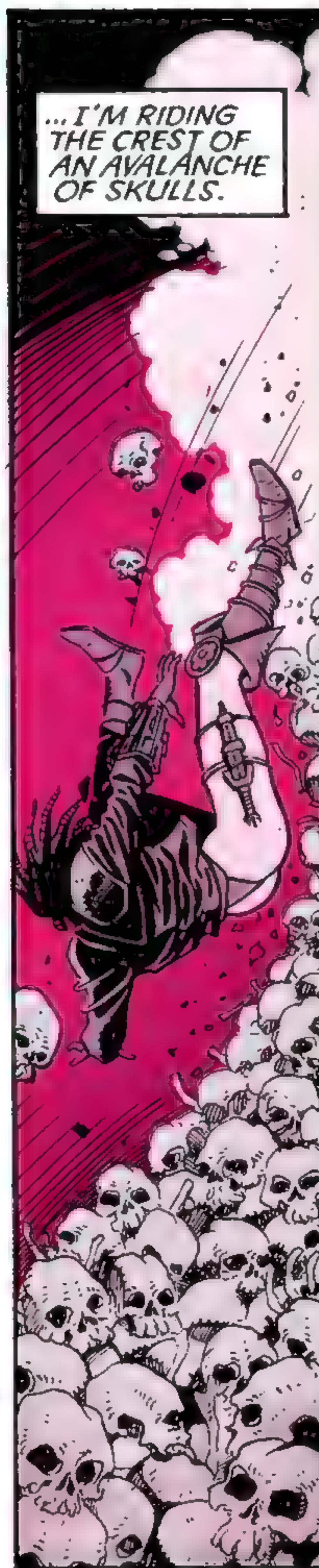
AGAIN, I SCREAM
DENIAL!

NOT ONLY AT
WHAT'S ABOUT
TO HAPPEN...

...BUT HOW
EAGERLY I
DESIRE IT.



THE NEXT
I KNOW...

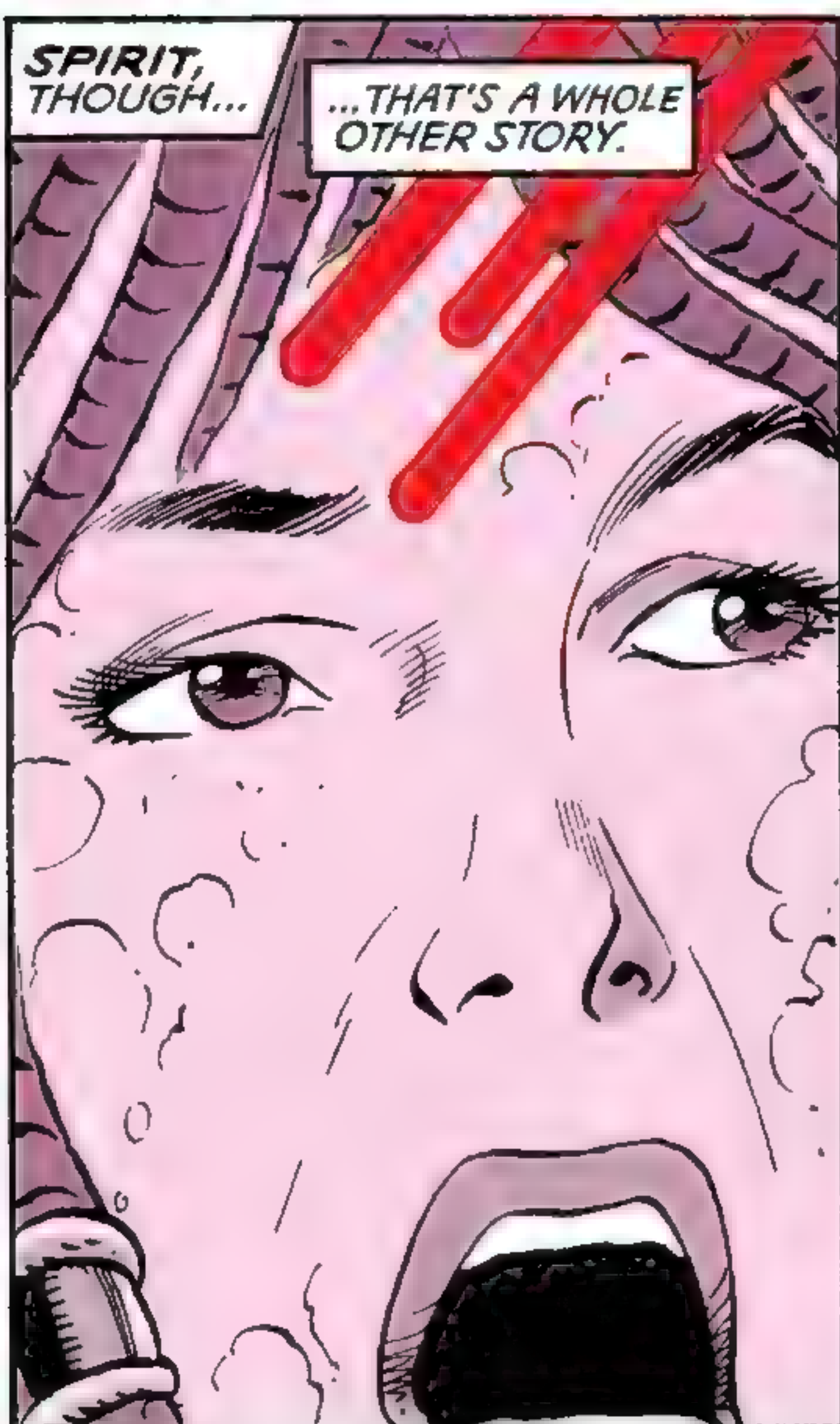


...I'M RIDING
THE CREST OF
AN AVALANCHE
OF SKULLS.



I REACH BOTTOM
BRUISED BUT
NOT BROKEN...

...AT LEAST
IN FLESH.



SPIRIT,
THOUGH...

...THAT'S A WHOLE
OTHER STORY.



ASH...
PARNALL.

ALWAYS
SHE ASKS.

ALWAYS
THE SAME
NAME.



I'M TOO TIRED TO FIGHT ANYMORE.

A TROPHY'S NOT
DESIGNED TO HAVE
MUCH SENSE OF SELF.
HER ROLE IS TO BE
WHAT OTHERS DESIRE
OF HER. WHY NOT
BIG MAMA AS MUCH
AS LUCIEN?

MAYBE IT'S FOR
THE BEST...

BAM BAM BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA

...TO GIVE THE
PREDATOR
WHAT SHE
WANTS.

ASH...

OVER
HERE!

LOOKS
LIKE GOOD
COVER!

FOR AS
LONG AS IT
LASTS.

MARIA--YOU
OKAY?!

BLEEDING
BLOODY
HELL?!

Oh!

ZIP ZIP BAM BAM ZIP BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA

LEAVE HER,
SHIROW!

IF WE DON'T
STOP THESE
TECSEKS...

...WHAT'S
HAPPENED
TO HER
DOESN'T
MATTER!

GENNA!

WE'RE
CLEAR!
GET YOUR ASS
OVER HERE,
NOW!

POW KAM CHOW ZARK BAM BAM BAM

IN MY
OWN WAY,
MAJOR.

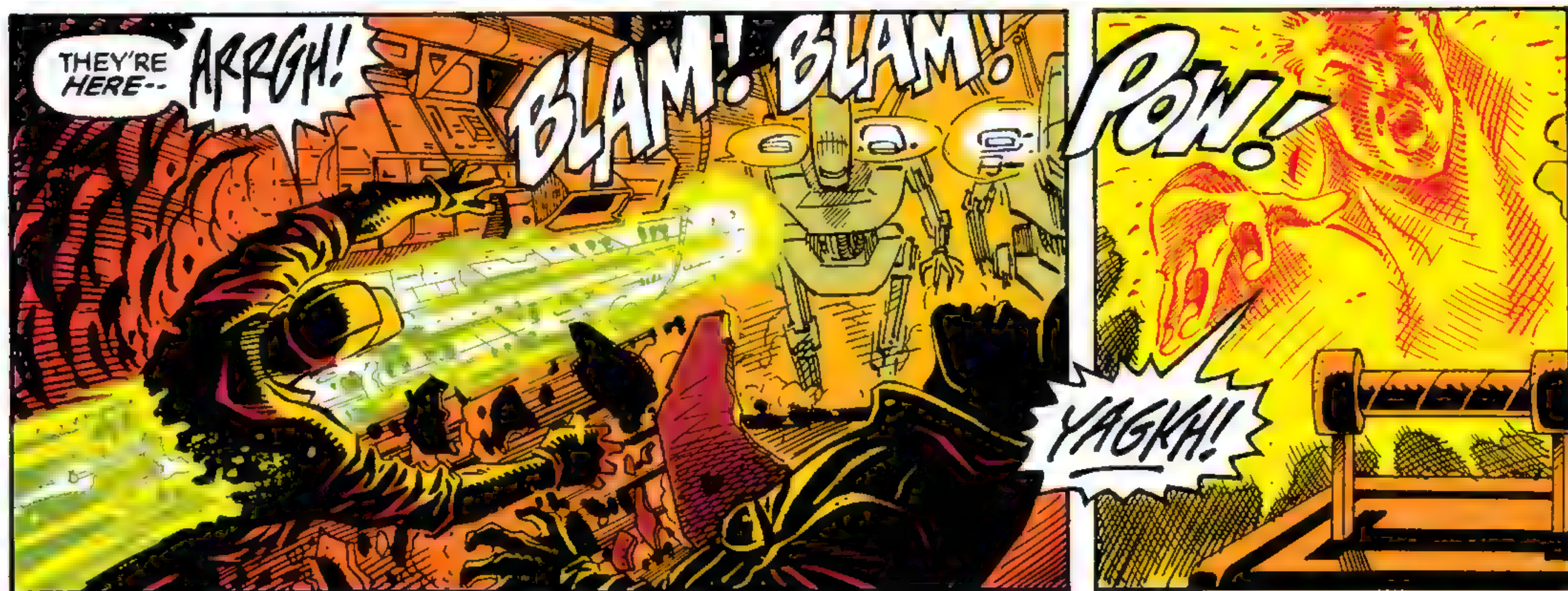
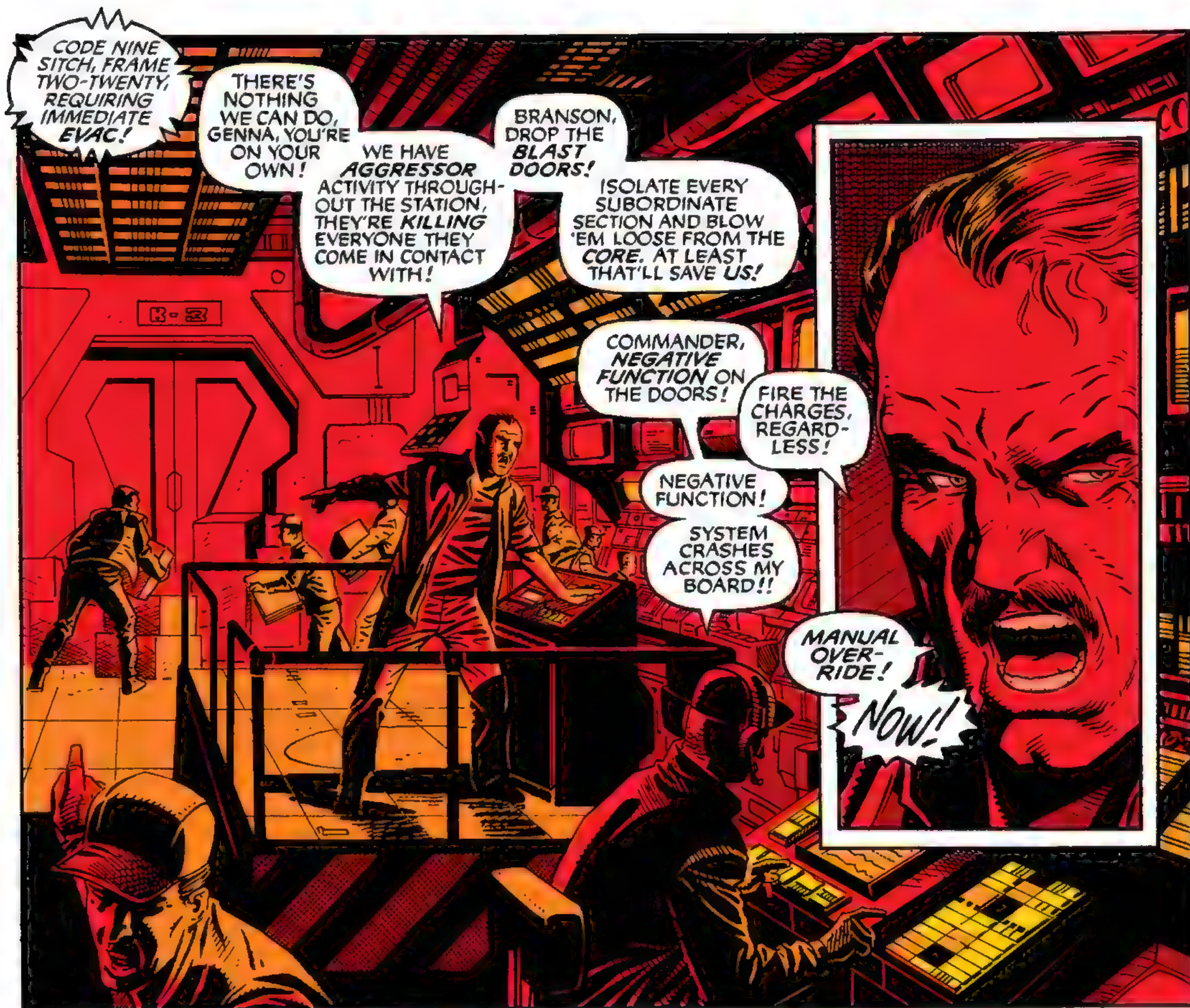
IN MY OWN
GOOD TIME.

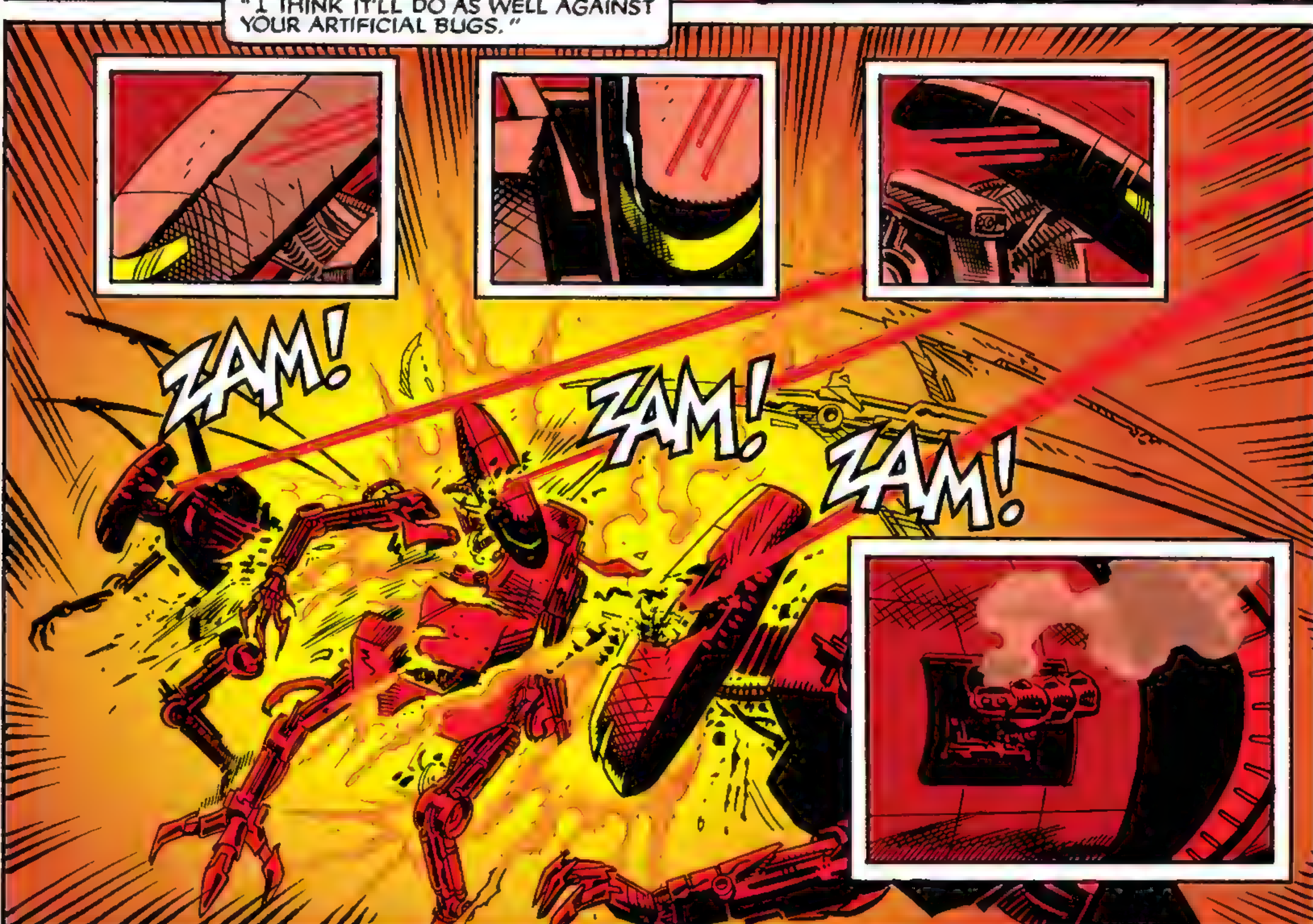
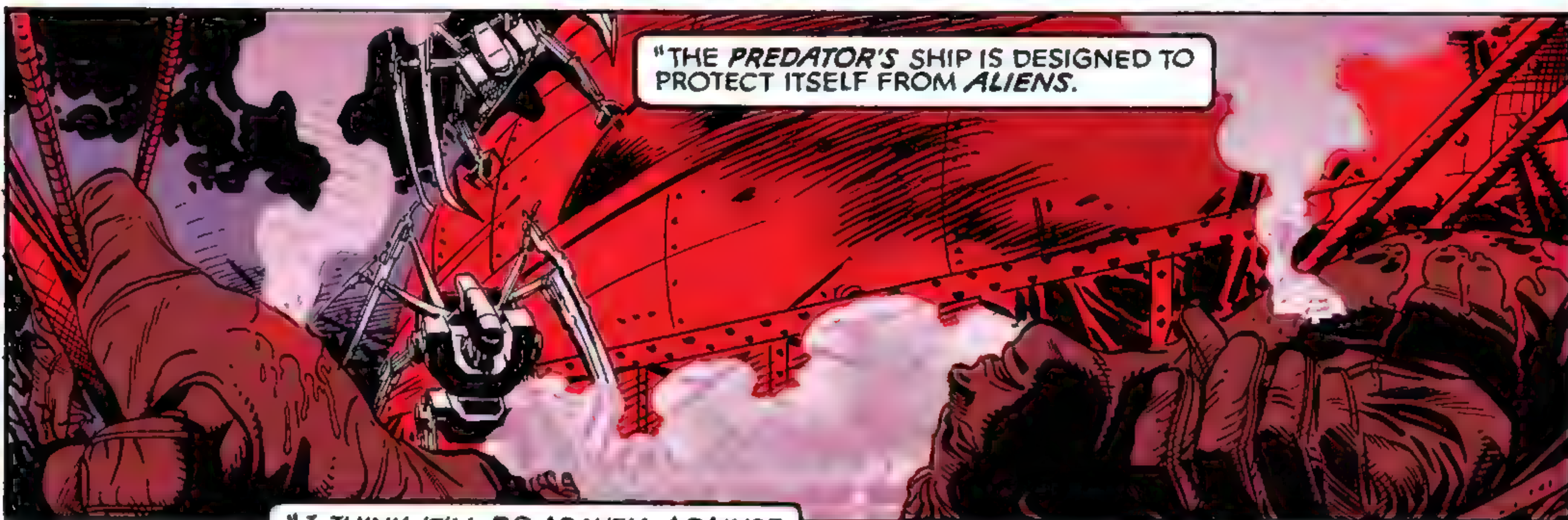
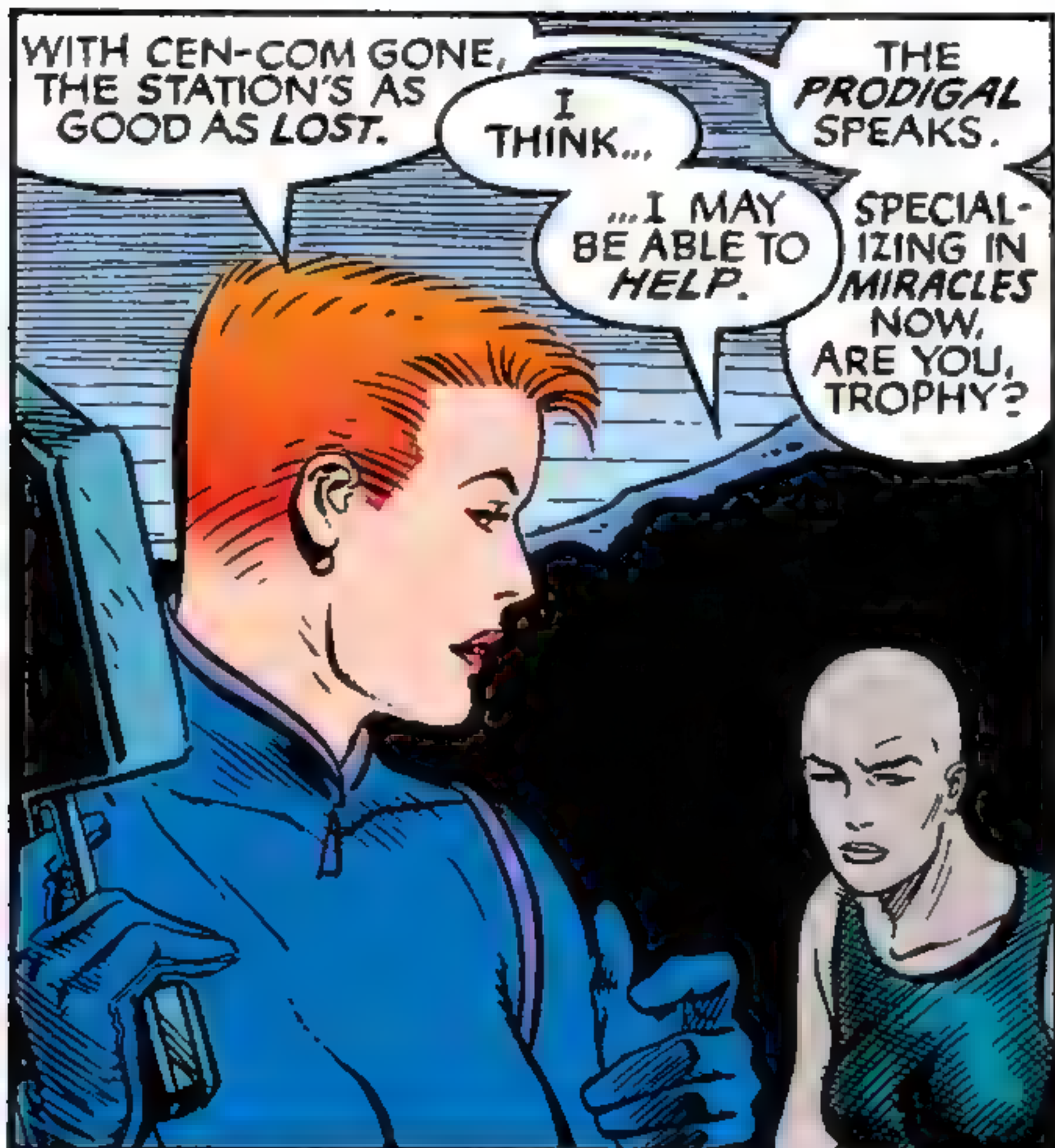
I GOT AN
IDEAL FIELD
OF FIRE HERE,
I'M NOT ABOUT
TO LET IT GO
TO WASTE.

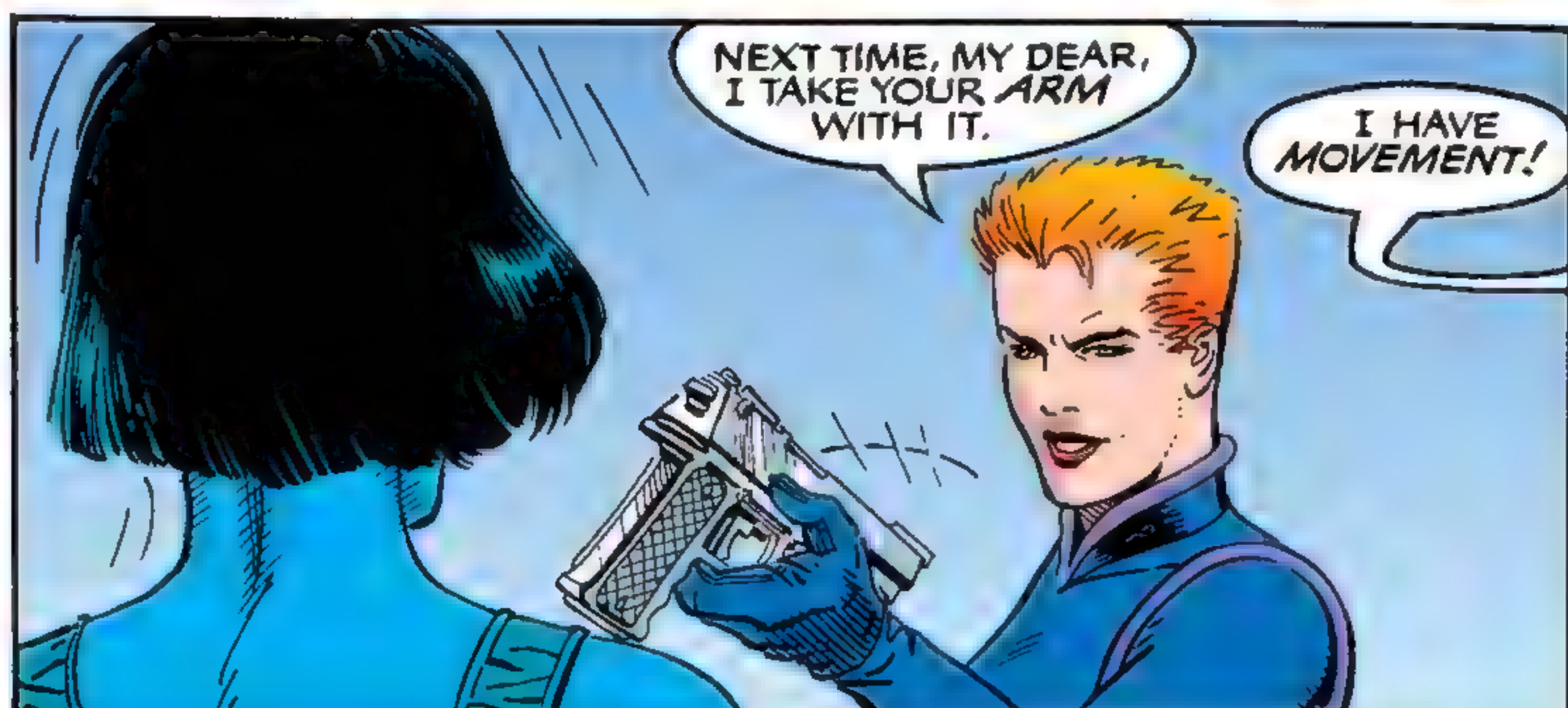
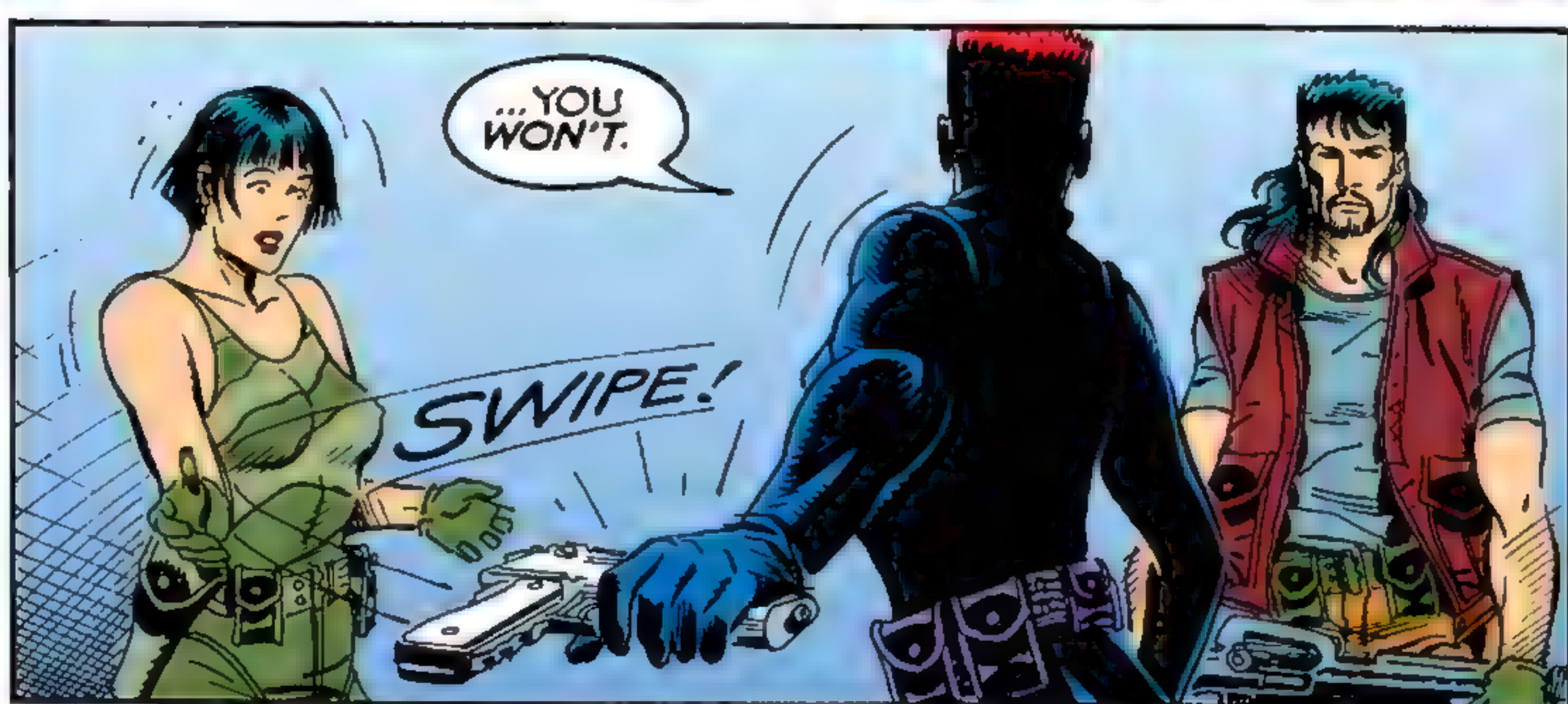
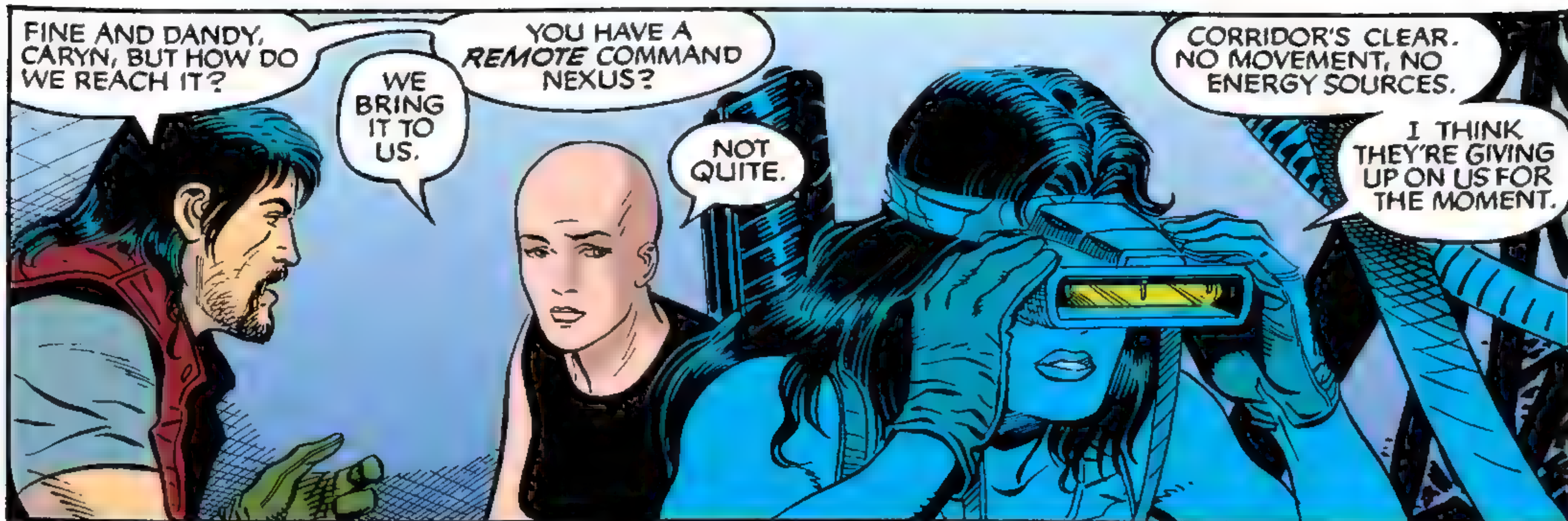
AGKGH!













WHERE
AND
WHAT?

THOUSAND METERS.
NOTHING YET IN THE
CLEAR KILL ZONE.

THINK THEY'LL COME
THROUGH THE WALLS,
USING MAINTENANCE
CONDUITS AND AIR
DUCTS?

WHAT WE'D
DO, IN THEIR PLACE.
WE'VE GOT TO ASSUME
THEY'RE AT LEAST
AS SMART.

IF WE'RE
GOING, IT
BETTER BE
SOON.

ONCE THEY
CHARGE, I
DON'T THINK
THEY'LL QUIT
'TIL WE'RE
OVERRUN.



I MARK
A LIFE-
SIGN!

THE SIGNATURE
IS MY PARTNER,
SADIQ. IT'S
STATIONARY, AND
THERE'S ANOTHER
TRACE AS WELL.

THOSE READINGS, THOUGH,
THEY MAKE NO SENSE. A
GHOST IMAGE, MAYBE, A
REFLECTION OF SADIQ'S
OWN SIGNAL.

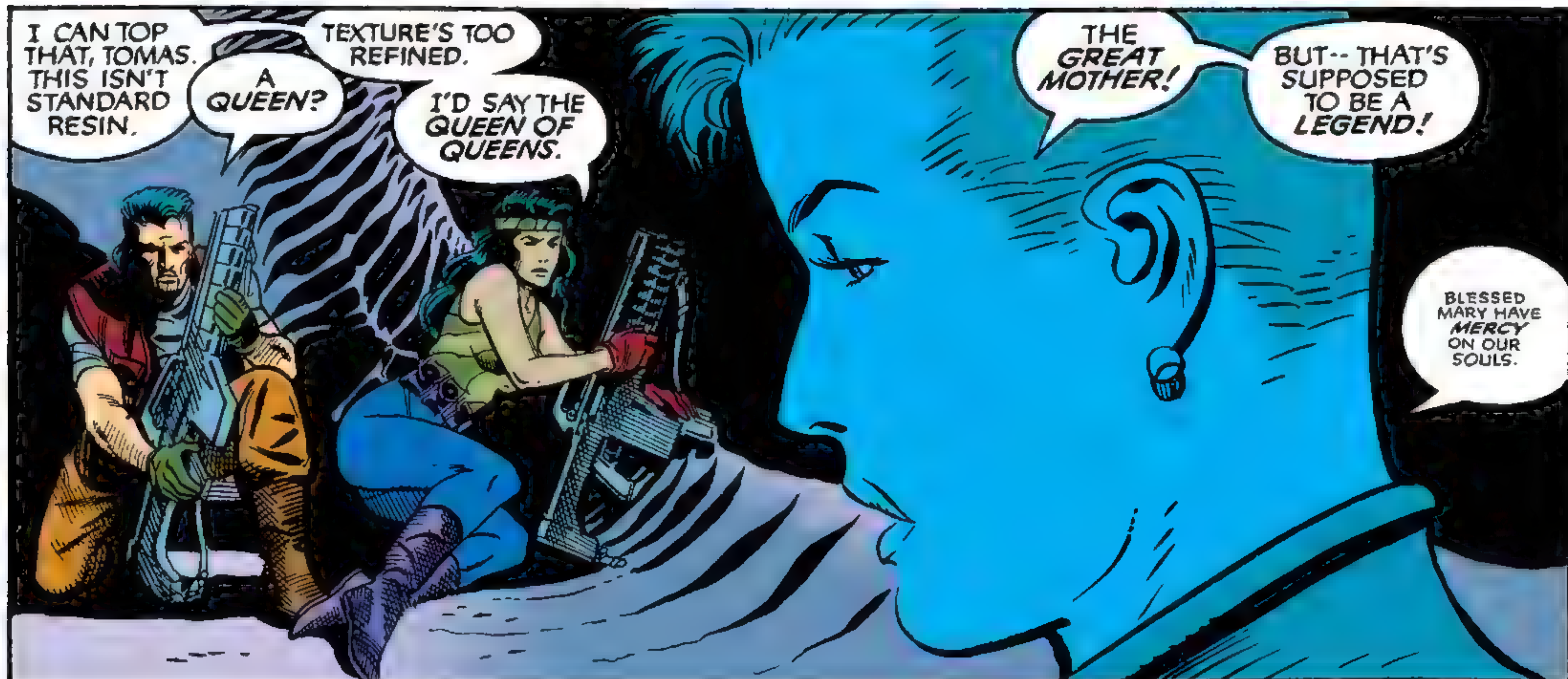
**BIG
MAMA.**

THAT'S THE BACK-
GROUND RESONANCE
OF HER **CHAMELEON
FIELD**.

NOW WE HAVE A DESTINATION,
SHIROW. GENNA LEADS US TO THE
PREDATOR. THEN, **BIG MAMA** CAN
SUMMON HER SHIP.

YOU'RE
NOT
LISTENING,
CARYN.

LOOK WHERE WE ARE!
THEY'RE INSIDE A NEST AND
THEY AREN'T MOVING. YOU
KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS.



I CAN TOP
THAT, TOMAS.
THIS ISN'T
STANDARD
RESIN.

A
QUEEN?

TEXTURE'S TOO
REFINED.

I'D SAY THE
**QUEEN OF
QUEENS.**

THE
**GREAT
MOTHER!**

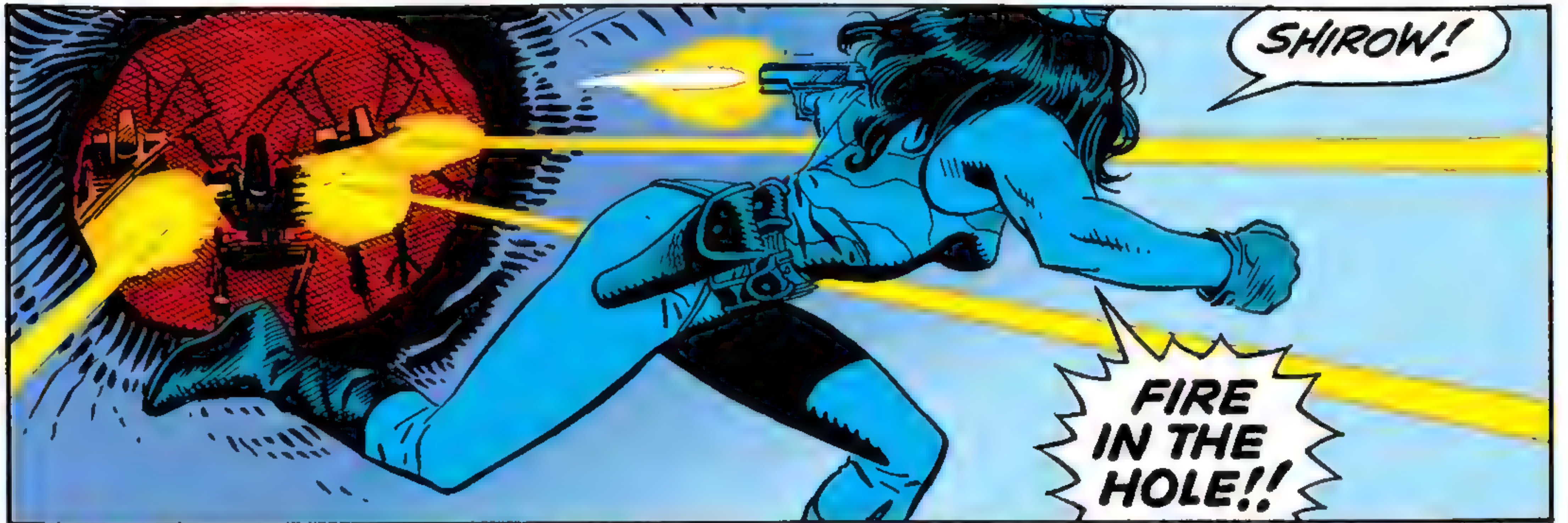
BUT-- THAT'S
SUPPOSED
TO BE A
LEGEND!

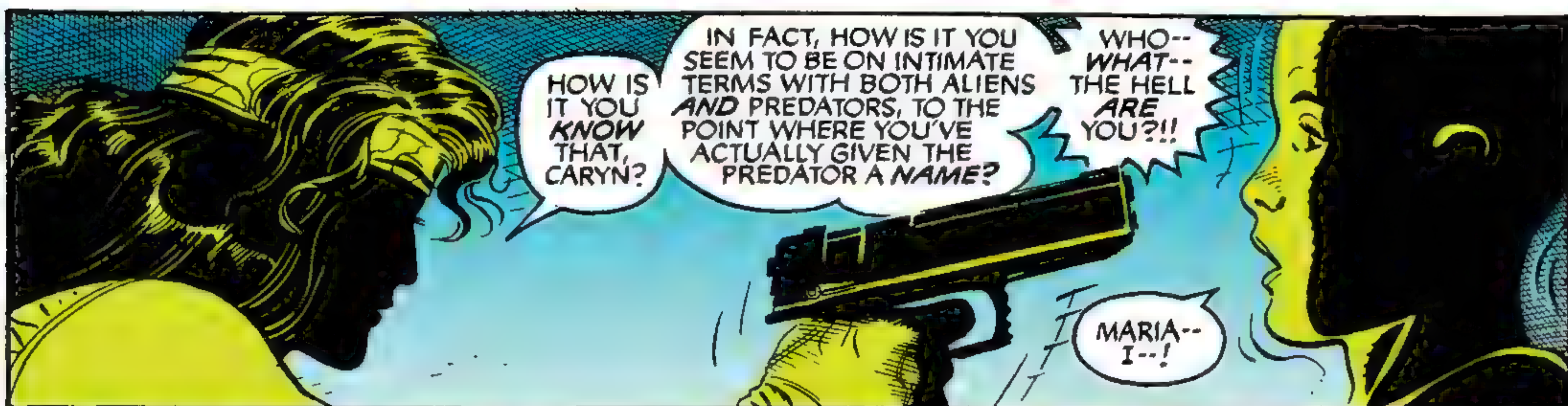
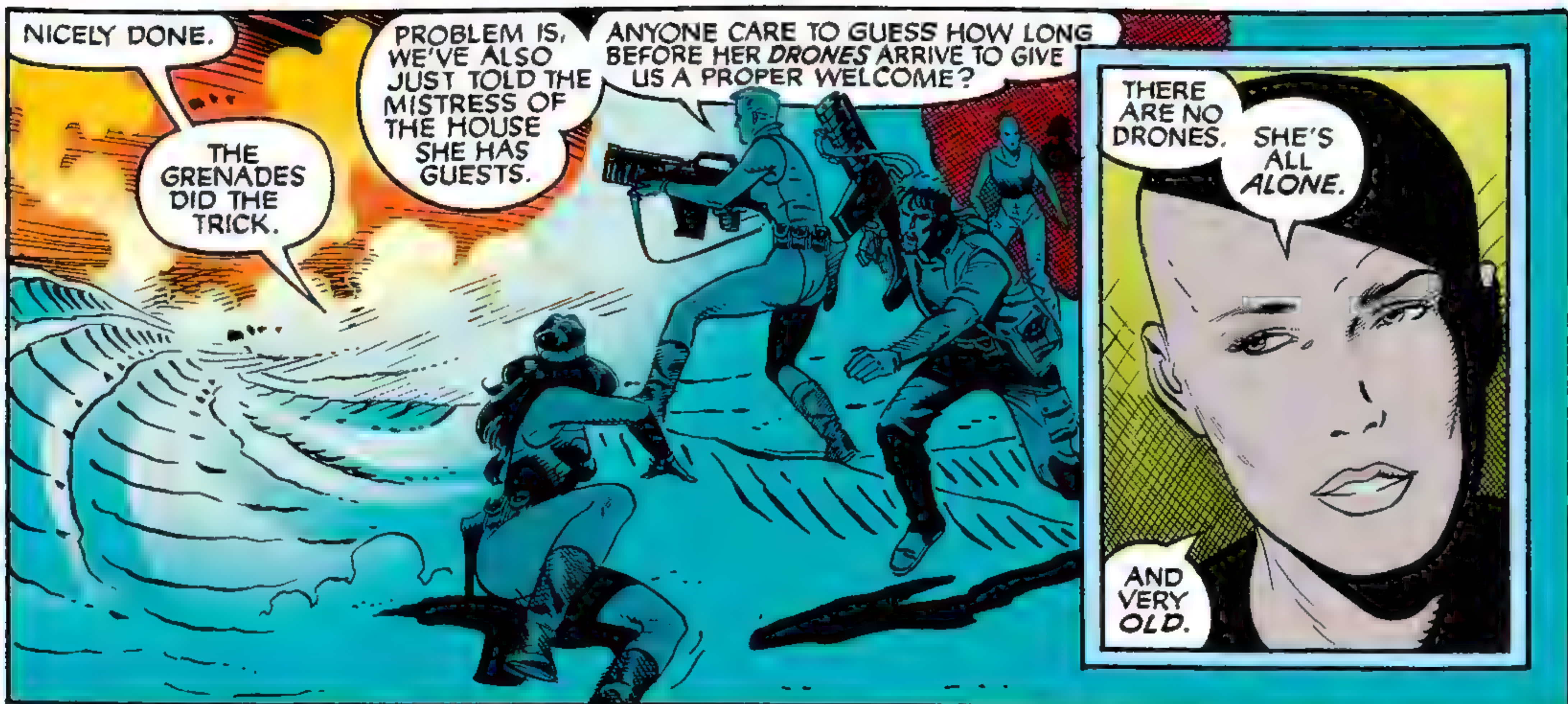
BLESSED
MARY HAVE
MERCY
ON OUR
SOULS.

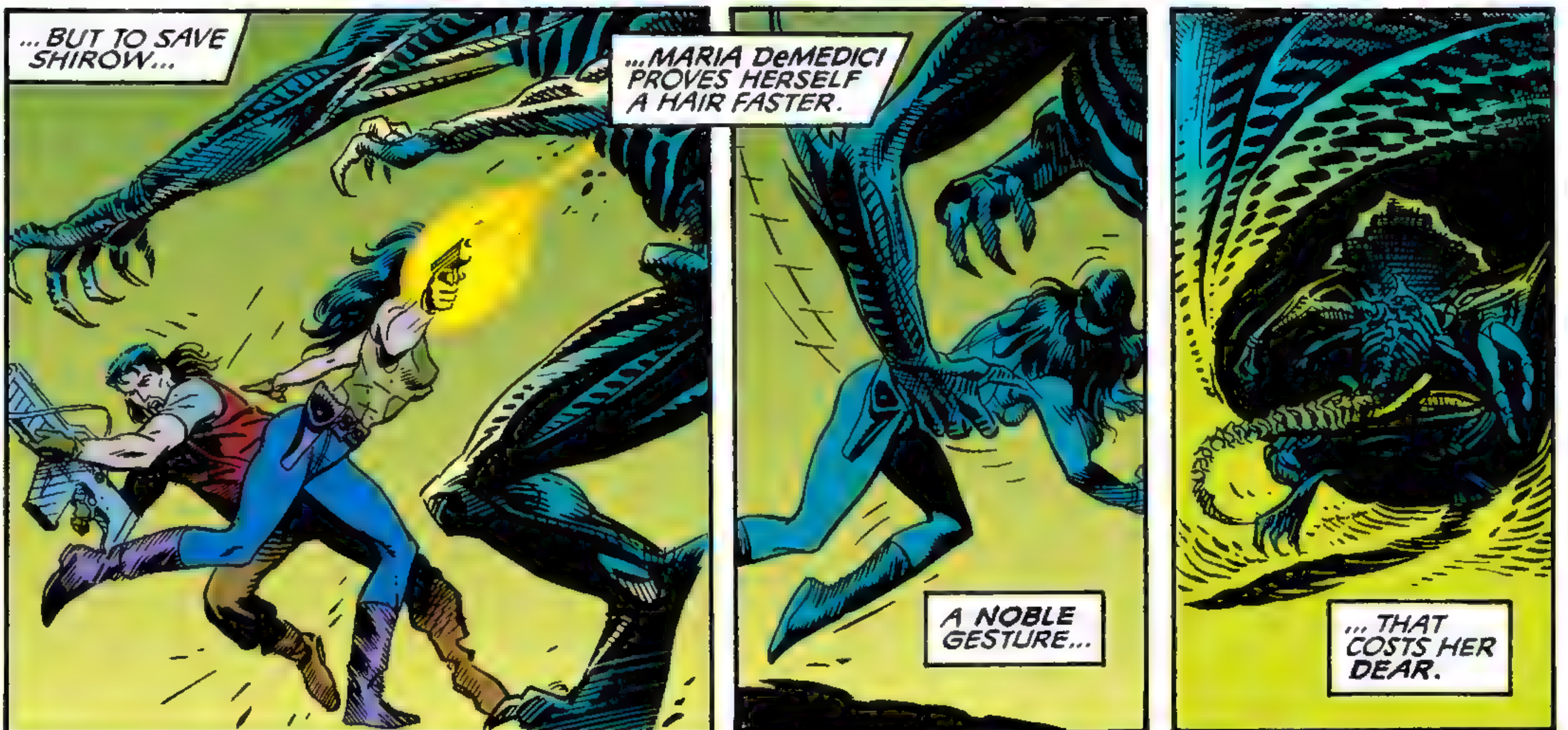
WE'RE **DEEP** IN THE NEST
WHEN SHIROW CALLS A
SUDDEN HALT.

IN THE DISTANCE,
BACK THE WAY WE
CAME, THERE'S THE
SOUND OF FIRING.

COME ON,
DeMEDICI,
COME ON,
COME ON,
COME ON!



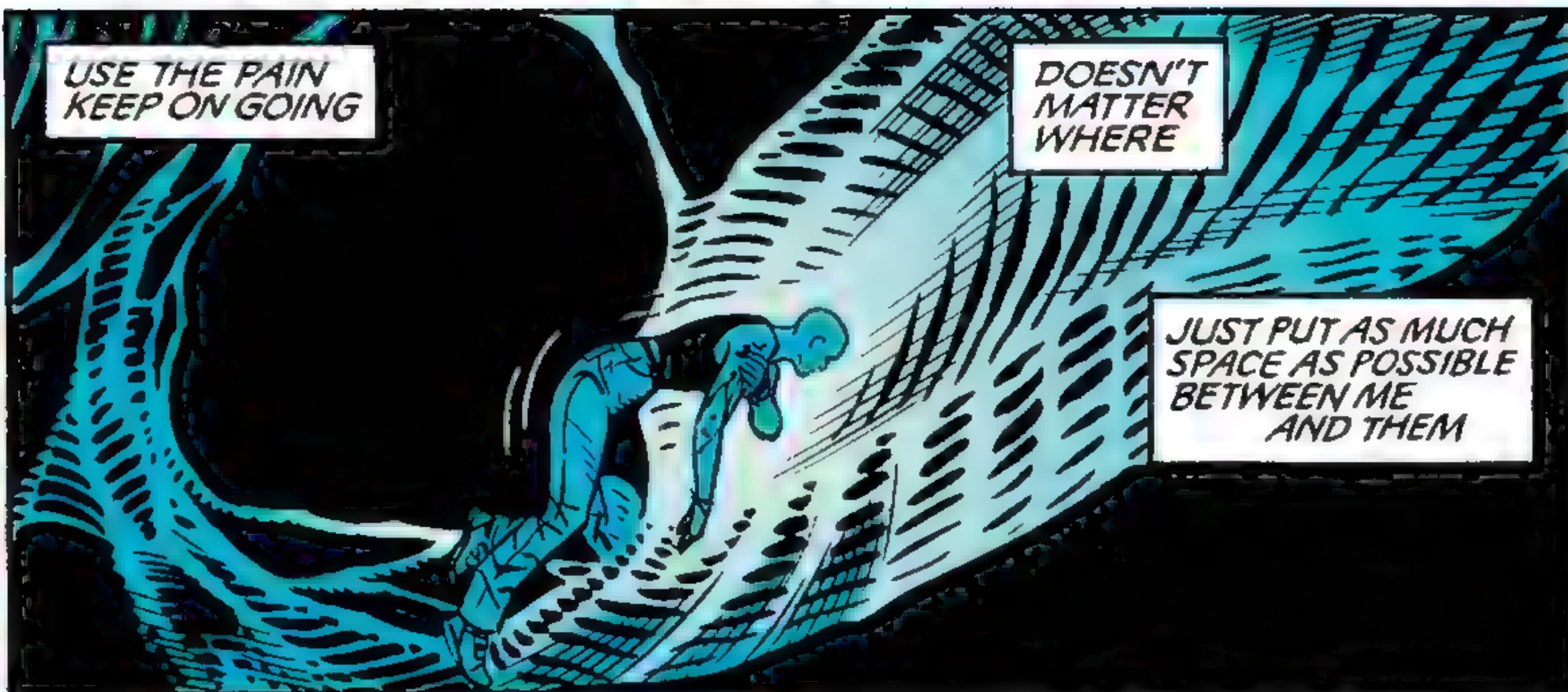






OW!

DON'T STOP
DON'T STOP



USE THE PAIN
KEEP ON GOING

DOESN'T
MATTER
WHERE

JUST PUT AS MUCH
SPACE AS POSSIBLE
BETWEEN ME
AND THEM



SAME AS
HONDURAS.

WHEN I RAN FROM
BIG MAMA.

THOUGHT THAT
WAS A VIRTUAL
SCENARIO. AN
AMUSEMENT
CREATED FOR
ME BY TOY.



SURVIVED THEN.

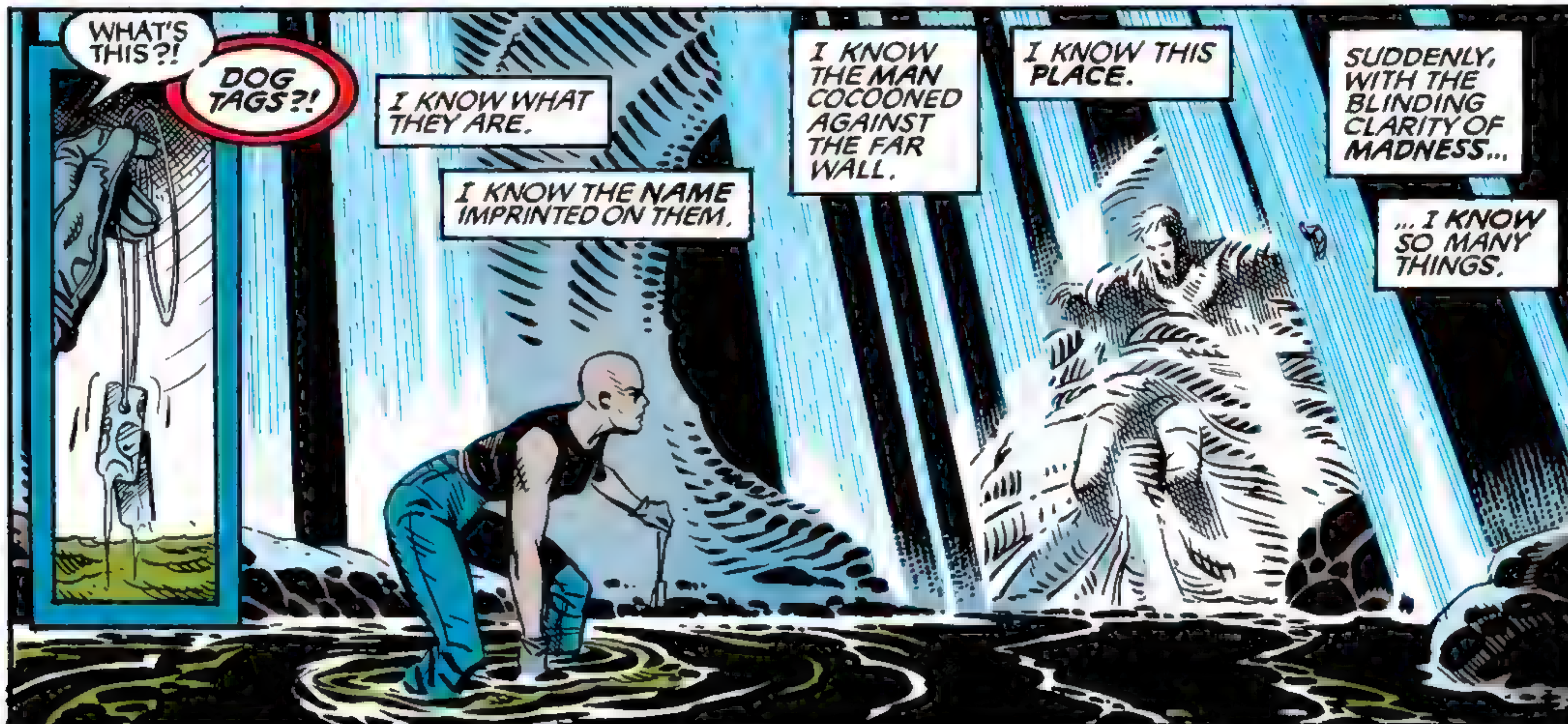
HELL, I
WON!

ONE THING HASN'T
CHANGED. I HEAL
IMPOSSIBLY FAST.

EVEN AS I TUMBLE
THROUGH YET
ANOTHER FALL I
REALIZE...

...I'M NO
LONGER
BLEEDING.

MY ARM
DOESN'T
EVEN HURT.



WHAT'S
THIS?!

DOG
TAGS?!

I KNOW WHAT
THEY ARE.

I KNOW THE NAME
IMPRINTED ON THEM.

I KNOW
THE MAN
COCOONED
AGAINST
THE FAR
WALL.

I KNOW THIS
PLACE.

SUDDENLY,
WITH THE
BLINDING
CLARITY OF
MADNESS...

... I KNOW
SO MANY
THINGS.

...AND NONE HAVE THE SLIGHTEST CONNECTION TO A TROPHY WIFE NAMED CARYN DELACROIX.

Oh, STEPHAN.

COMMANDER STEPHAN MADRIGAL, UNITED STATES NAVY, ATTACHED TO THE NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION...

... ASSIGNED TO THE "PATH-FINDER" EXPLORER PROGRAM.

YOU WERE SO BEAUTIFUL.

MY SECOND-IN-COMMAND.

MY FRIEND.

HOW EASILY YOU BETRAYED YOUR EVERY OATH.

CUT ME LOOSE, BEFORE SHE COMES BACK!

IT'S ALL RIGHT, I'M NOT INFECTED!

FOR GOD'S SAKE, HELP ME!

WHY SHOULD I?

PLEASE-- DON'T!

NOT TO WORRY, STEPHAN.

PULSE-RIFLE. PLASMA-CASTER. THEY'RE TOO QUICK AND KIND AN END-- TOO EASY A PUNISHMENT--

--FOR THE LIKES OF YOU.

BUT I'LL LEAVE YOU BIG MAMA'S SPEAR.

YOU CAN FIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE OR END IT--

--IF YOU'VE THE STRENGTH TO BREAK YOURSELF FREE.



GUESS NOT.

THE QUEEN NEVER CAME BACK FOR YOU.

NEITHER DID I.



YOU AND DEMATIER STOLE HER CHILDREN, STEPHAN, SAME AS YOU DID BIG MAMA'S.

THOUGHT YOU'D KILLED THE QUEEN, TOO, I BET.



SAME AS YOU THOUGHT YOU'D KILLED ME!

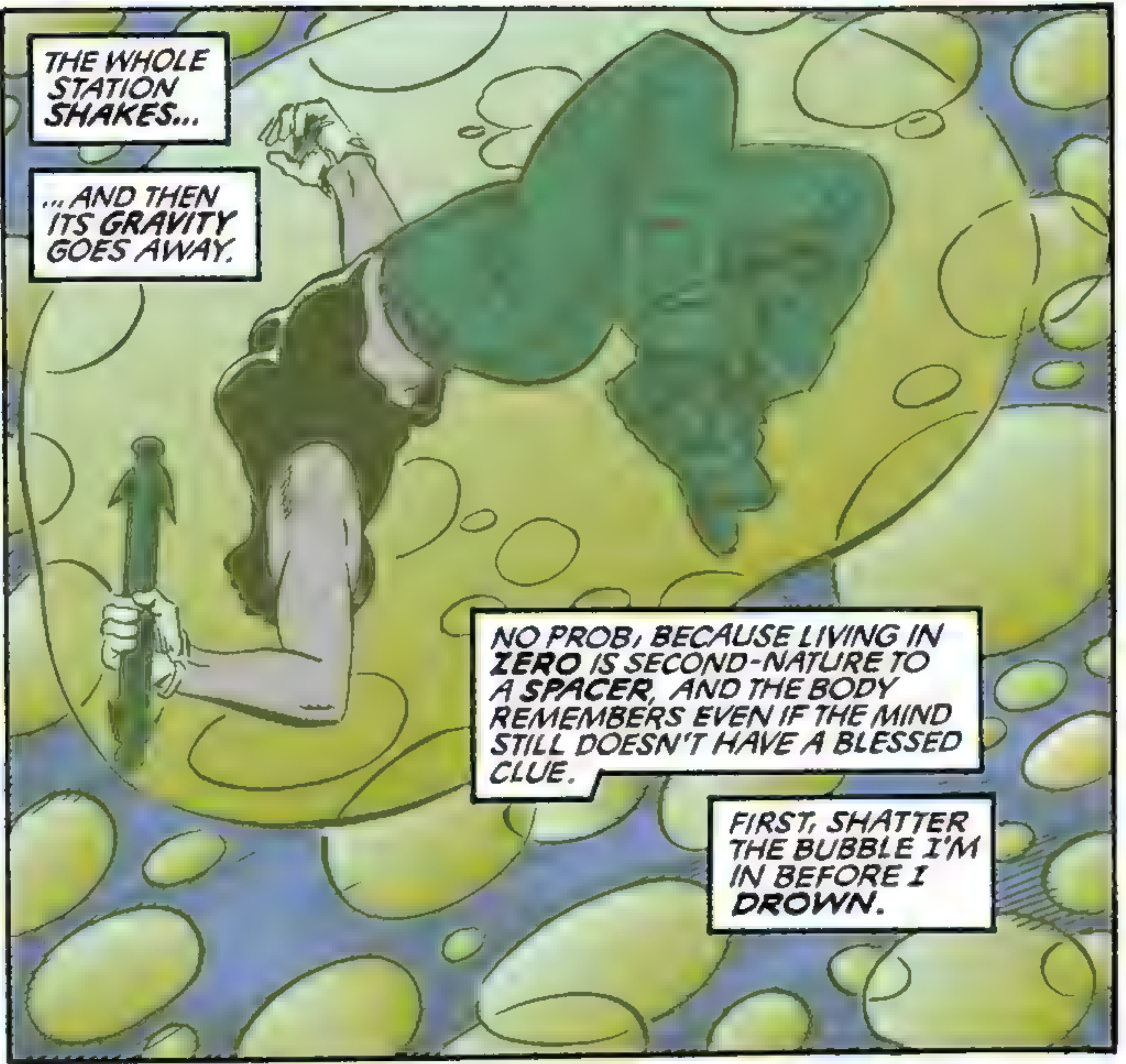


EVERYWHERE I TURN INSIDE MY HEAD...

... THERE ARE NEW WINDOWS, FLYING WIDE TO ADMIT NEW MEMORIES.

BUT BEFORE I CAN EVEN BEGIN TO LOOK...

EXPLOSION!

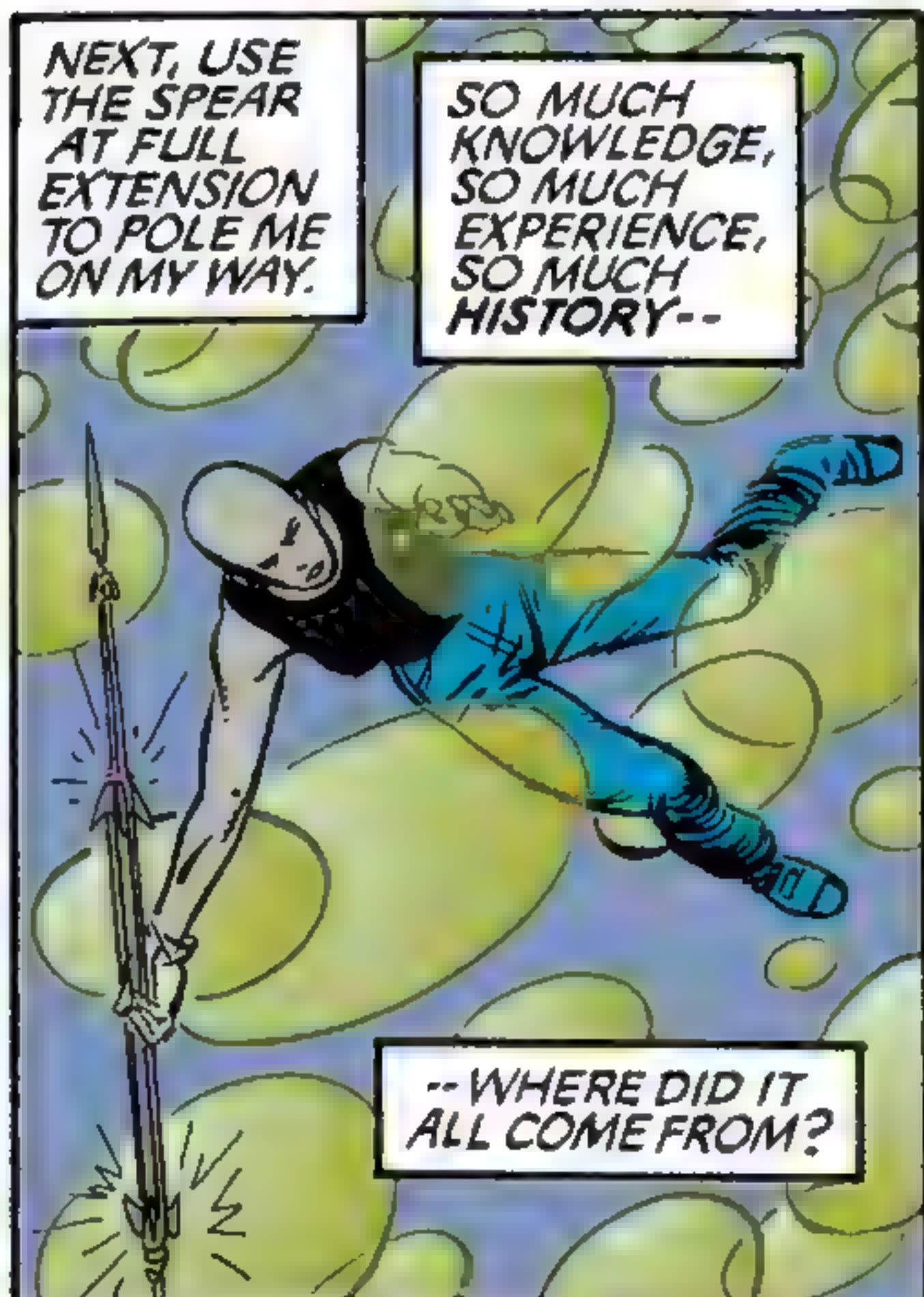


THE WHOLE STATION SHAKES...

... AND THEN ITS GRAVITY GOES AWAY.

NO PROB, BECAUSE LIVING IN ZERO IS SECOND-NATURE TO A SPACER, AND THE BODY REMEMBERS EVEN IF THE MIND STILL DOESN'T HAVE A BLESSED CLUE.

FIRST, SHATTER THE BUBBLE I'M IN BEFORE I DROWN.



NEXT, USE THE SPEAR AT FULL EXTENSION TO POLE ME ON MY WAY.

SO MUCH KNOWLEDGE, SO MUCH EXPERIENCE, SO MUCH HISTORY--

-- WHERE DID IT ALL COME FROM?



AS MARIA SAID--

--WHO AM I?!



MARIA'S MY PARTNER...

... AND MY FRIEND.

IF I CAN'T SAVE HER...

... I SURE AS HELL MEAN TO AVENGE HER.



HEART
OF THE
NEST.

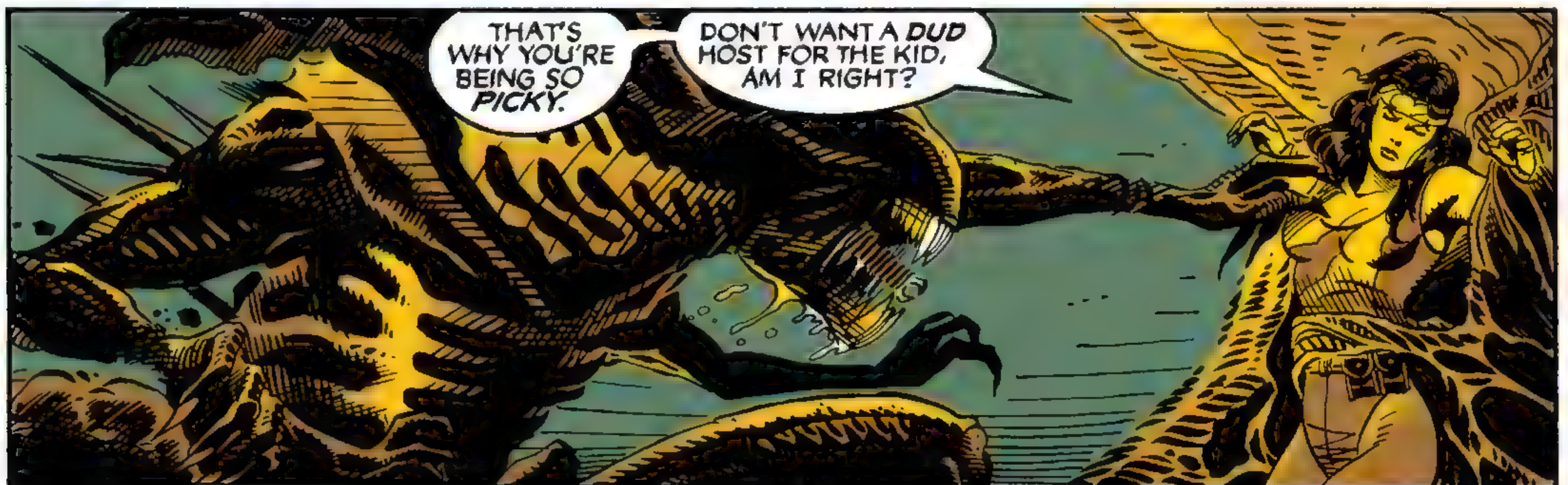
NO
DRONES.
A SINGLE
EGG.
CARYN
WAS
RIGHT!



VERY
OLD
AND
VERY
ALONE!

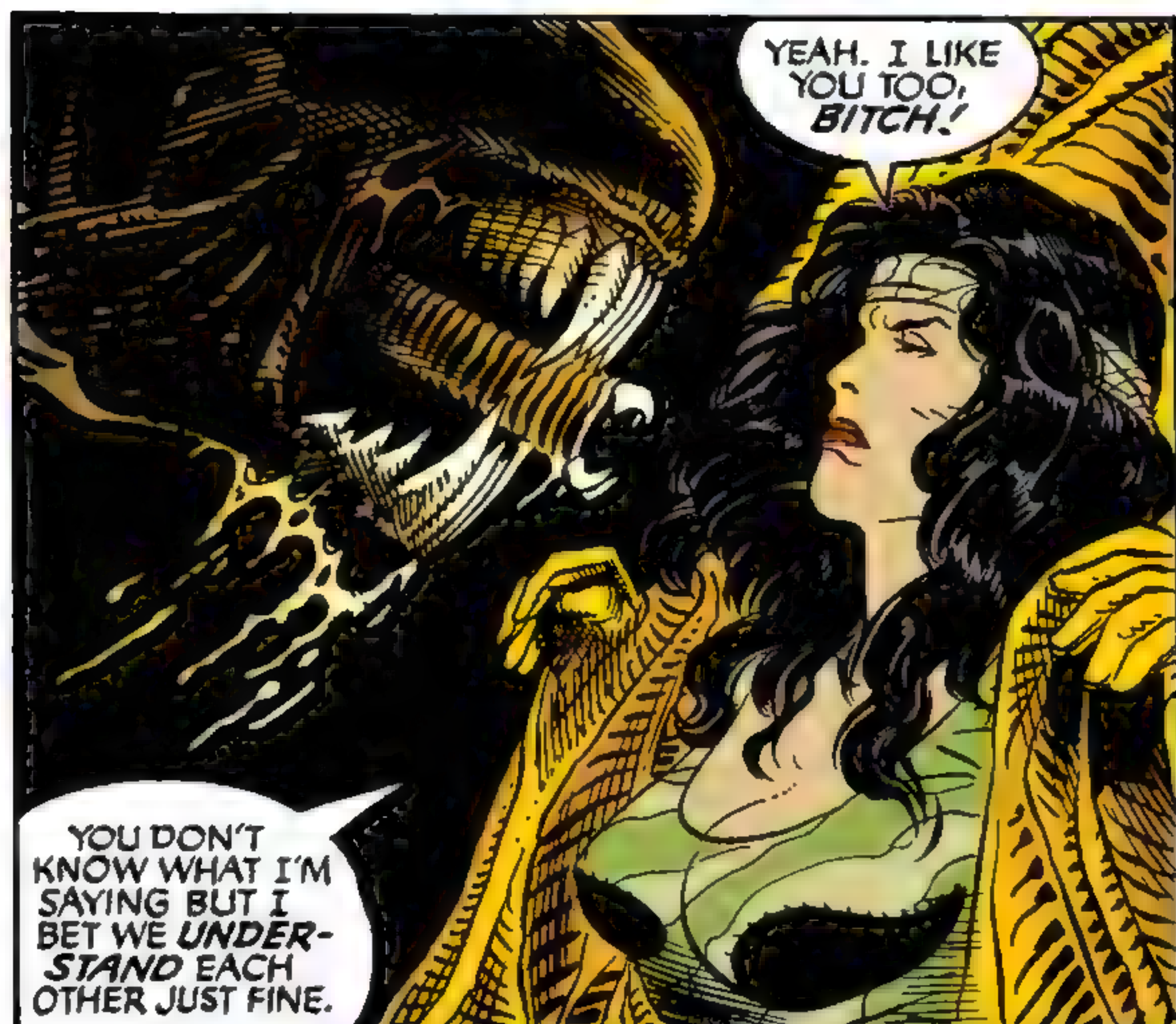
FROM THE
LOOKS OF
THINGS, THERE
WAS A HELLUVA
FIREFIGHT HERE.
A PRIMO
BUGHUNT.

THAT EGG'S
ALL YOU'VE
GOT, ISN'T IT?
ALL YOU'LL
EVER HAVE.



THAT'S
WHY YOU'RE
BEING SO
PICKY.

DON'T WANT A *DUD*
HOST FOR THE KID,
AM I RIGHT?



YEAH. I LIKE
YOU TOO,
BITCH!

YOU DON'T
KNOW WHAT I'M
SAYING BUT I
BET WE *UNDER-
STAND* EACH
OTHER JUST FINE.





EXPLOSION!

TOTALLY KAYO'D
THE GRAVITY SYSTEM,
THE WHOLE STATION'S
GONE WEIGHT-
LESS.

NEVER
HAVE A
BETTER
CHANCE--!



GOOD THING THE
CHAMBER'S SO
BIG.

GOT A FEW SECONDS
BEFORE THE QUEEN
CAN GRAB HERSELF
A HANDHOLD.

GOTTA MAKE
'EM COUNT!

THANK GOD
THE RESIN
HASN'T SET.
ONE GOOD
HEAVE--!



UP, UP,
AND
AWAY!

Whoops!

QUEEN'S
GOT
OTHER
IDEAS!

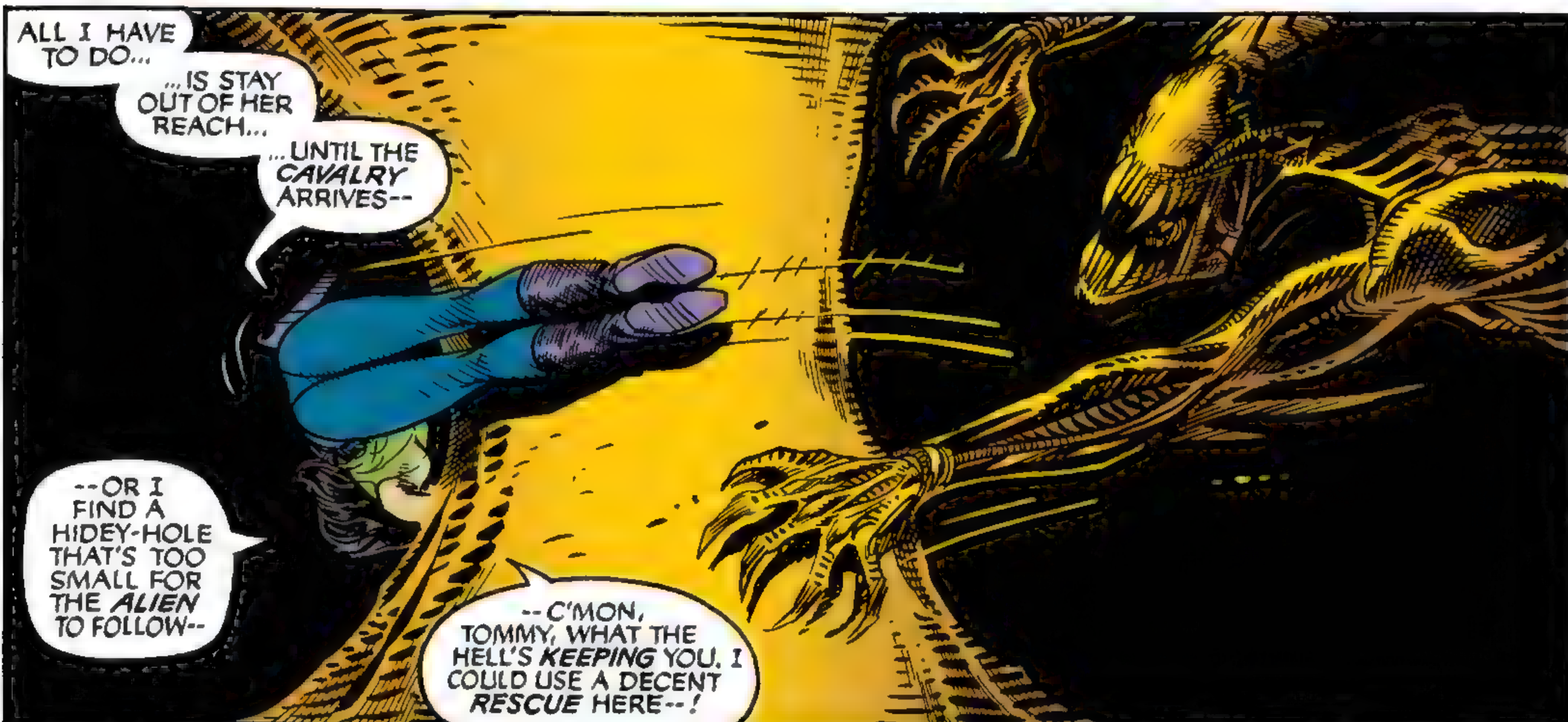


YOW!

CAN'T
FORGET--



--EVERY PART
OF HER IS
DEADLY!



ALL I HAVE
TO DO...

...IS STAY
OUT OF HER
REACH...

...UNTIL THE
CAVALRY
ARRIVES--

--OR I
FIND A
HIDEY-HOLE
THAT'S TOO
SMALL FOR
THE ALIEN
TO FOLLOW--

--C'MON,
TOMMY, WHAT THE
HELL'S KEEPING YOU. I
COULD USE A DECENT
RESCUE HERE--!



OR A WEAPON
I CAN
USE TO
KILL HER.



I APPEAR
TO HAVE THE
EXPERIENCE
IN ZERO-G
COMBAT.

THAT
GIVES
ME AN
EDGE--



--MY
LEG!?!



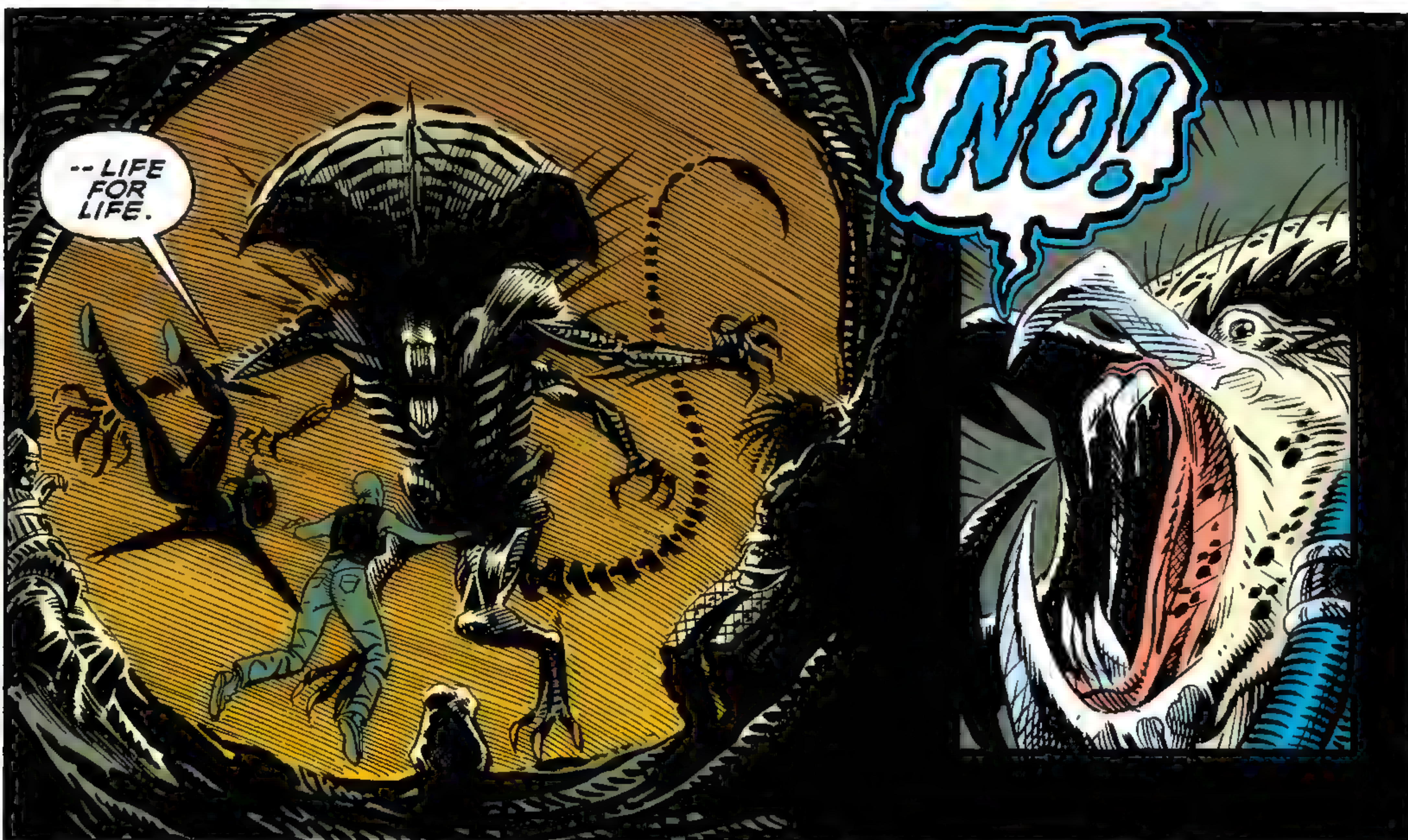
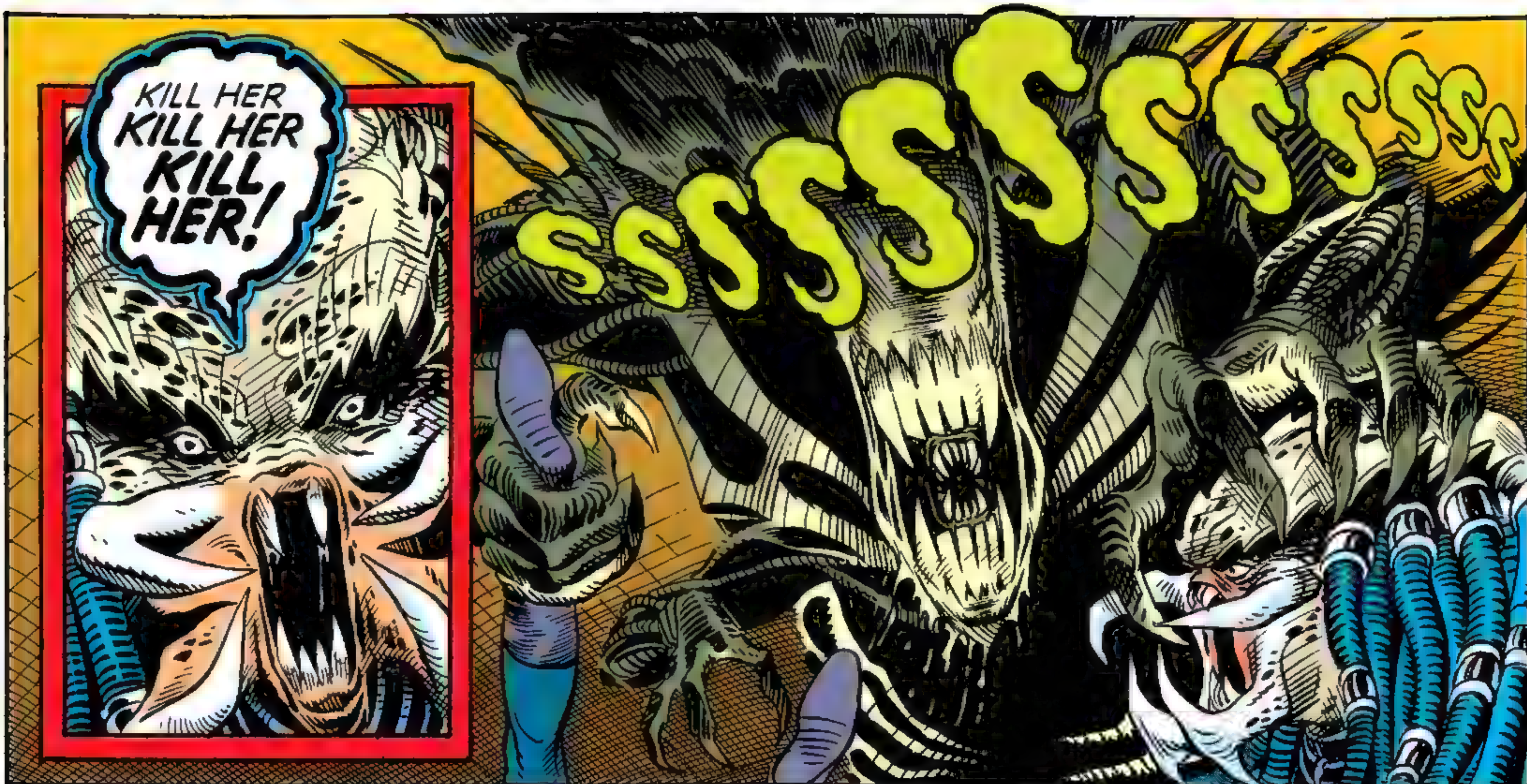
KILL

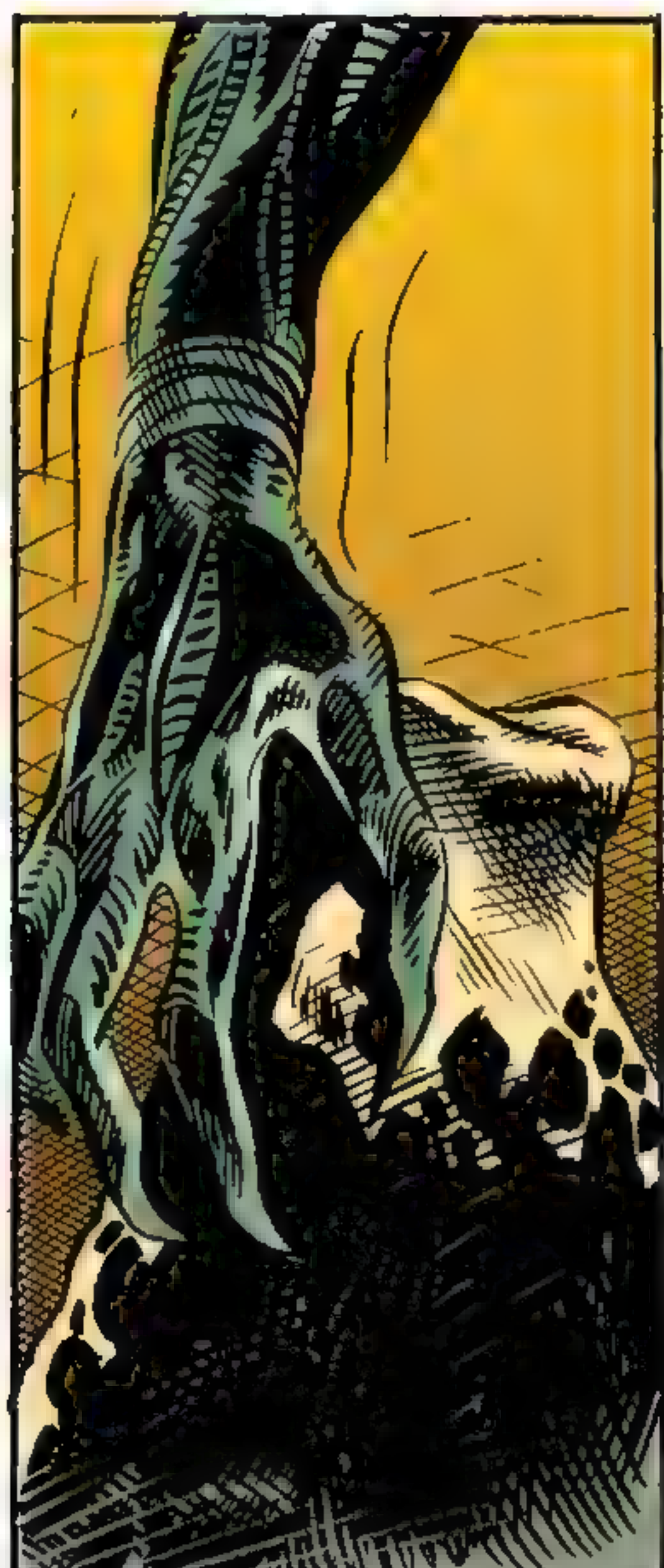
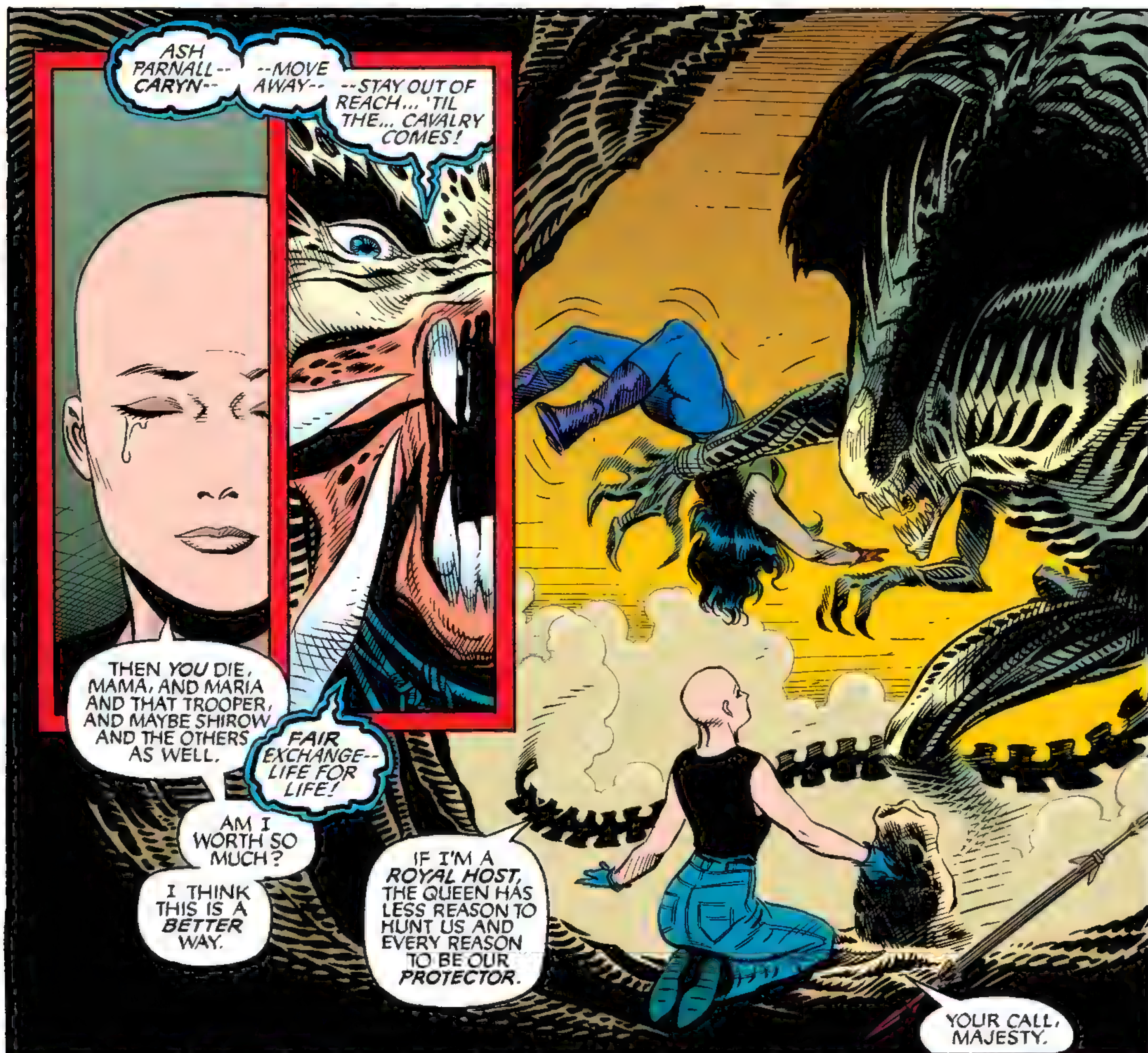


LEAVE
HER
ALONE!

IF YOU
VALUE THIS
EMBRYO--

--MOVE
AWAY!







I THOUGHT
IT WOULD
HURT.

I SUPPOSE THAT
COMES LATER.

WHEN THE EMBRYO
HATCHES AND TEARS
ITS WAY OUT OF
THE HOST.

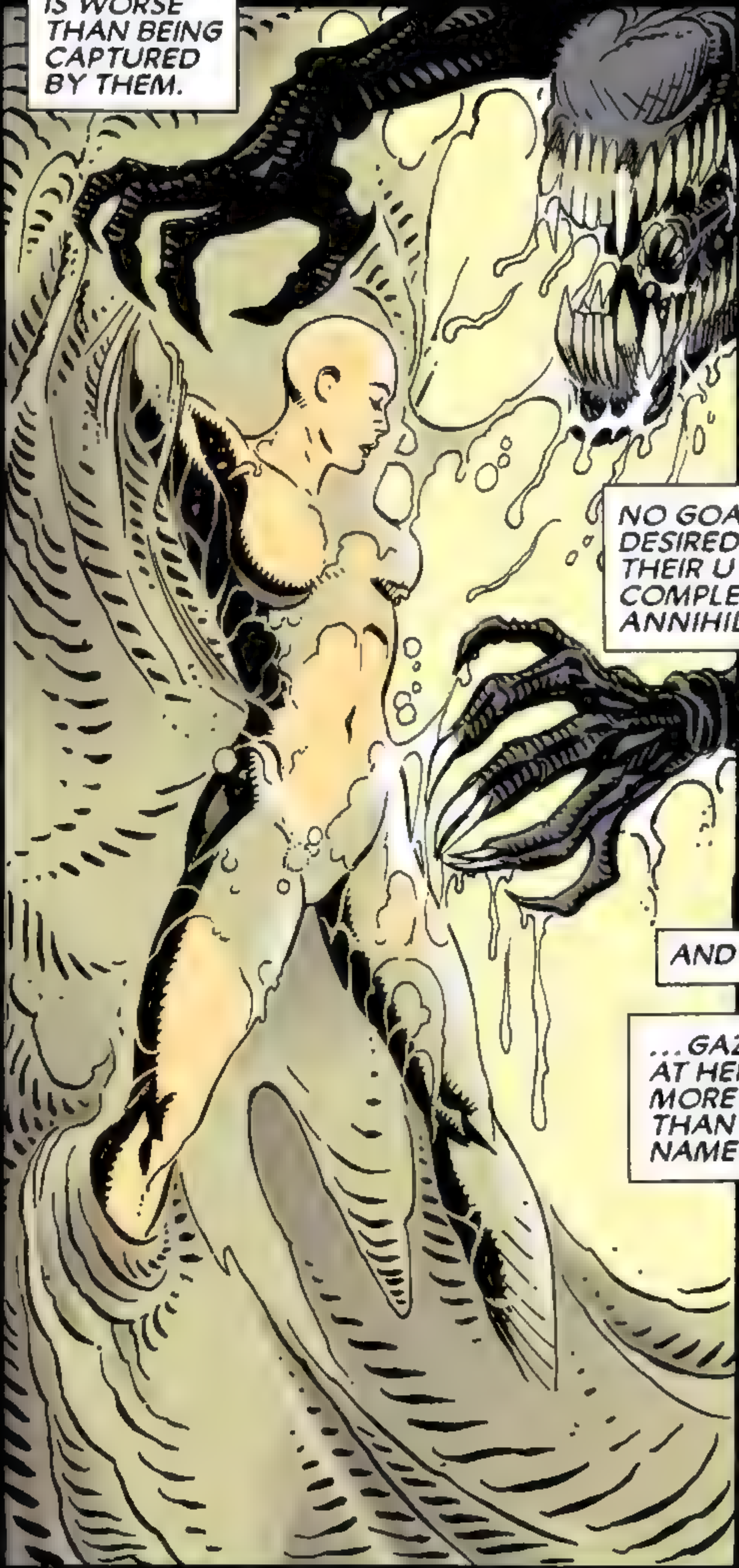
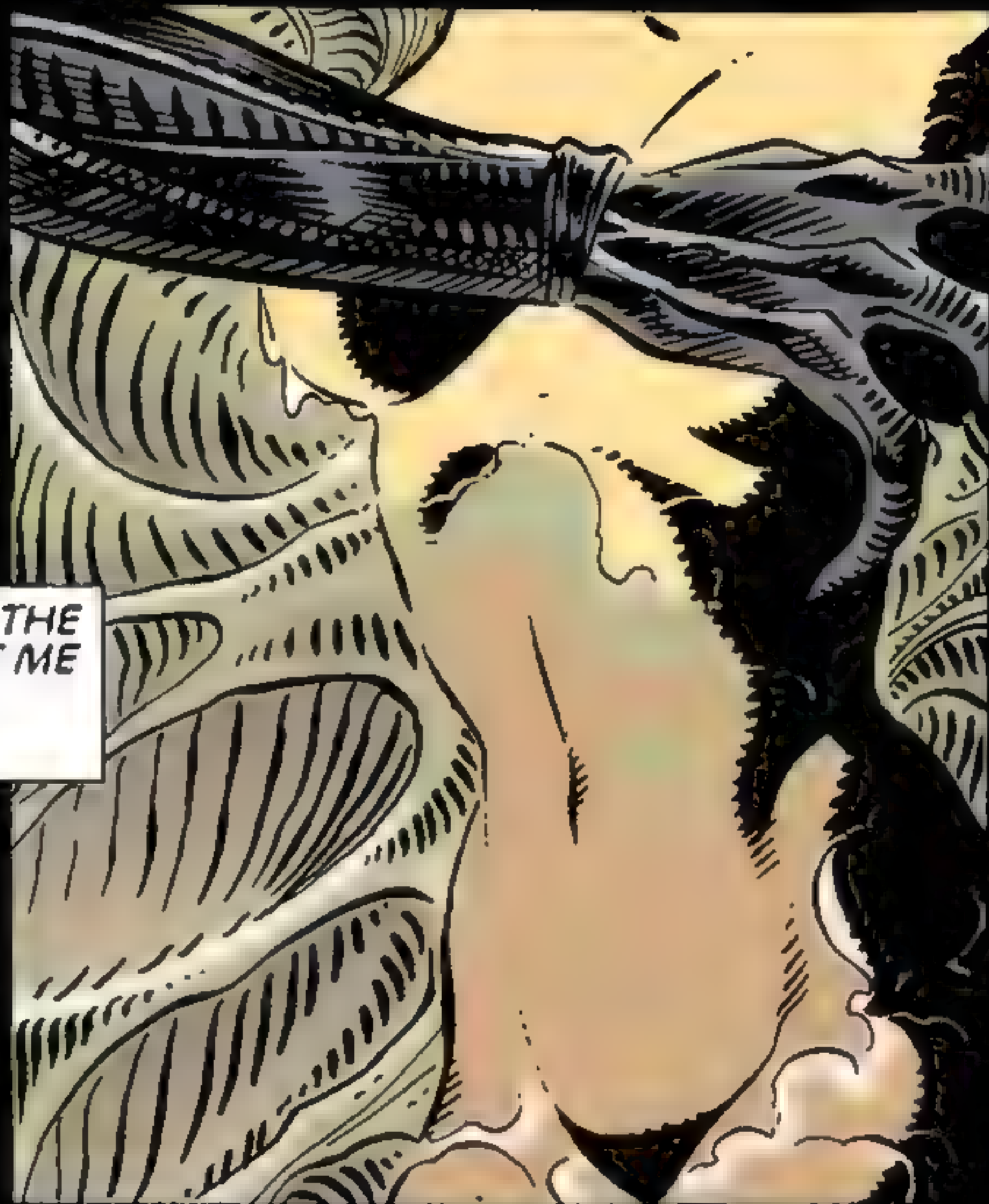


IT'S AN AWFUL FATE,
BUT I DON'T SEEM
TO MIND.

I WONDER THEN
IF THE MOTHER
QUEEN IS DOING
SOMETHING TO
MY HEAD, TO
TAKE AWAY MY
FEAR.

OR PERHAPS IT'S THE
RESIN SHE COATS ME
IN, ACTING AS A
SORT OF DRUG.

FOR AS LONG AS I CAN
REMEMBER, ALIENS HAVE
BEEN THE ULTIMATE
NIGHTMARE.



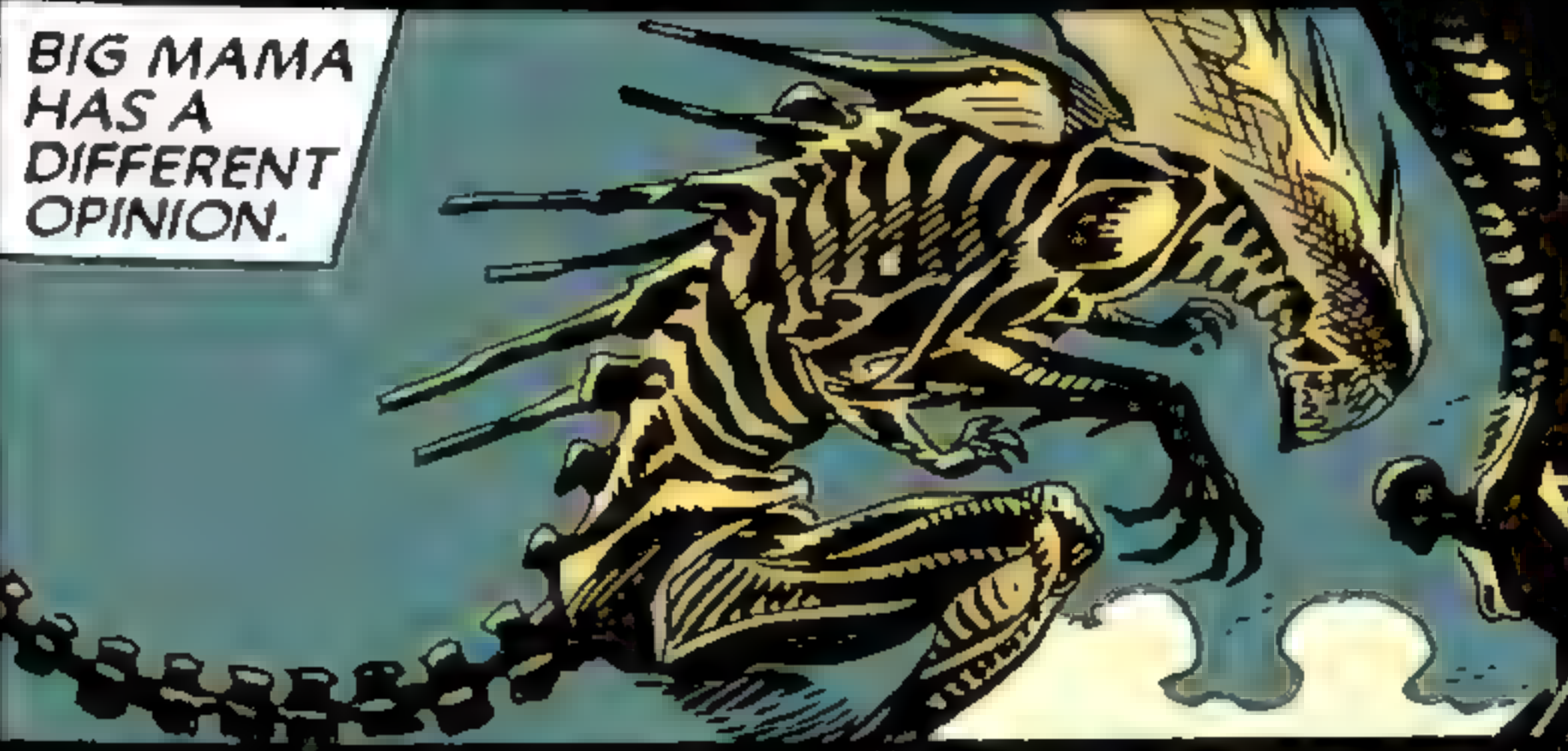
NOTHING
IS WORSE
THAN BEING
CAPTURED
BY THEM.

NO GOAL IS MORE
DESIRED THAN
THEIR UTTER AND
COMPLETE
ANNIHILATION.

AND YET...

...GAZING
AT HER WITH
MORE SENSES
THAN I HAVE
NAME FOR...

...THE EMOTION
I FEEL ISN'T HATE.



BIG MAMA
HAS A
DIFFERENT
OPINION.



PREDATORS AND ALIENS, THEY'RE
LIKE THE MONGOOSE
TO THE COBRA.

INSTINCTIVE ENEMIES,
FROM TIME'S BEGINNING
TO ITS END.

OF MY OWN FREE WILL,
I TOOK THE EMBRYO
THE MOTHER QUEEN
HAD MEANT FOR HER.

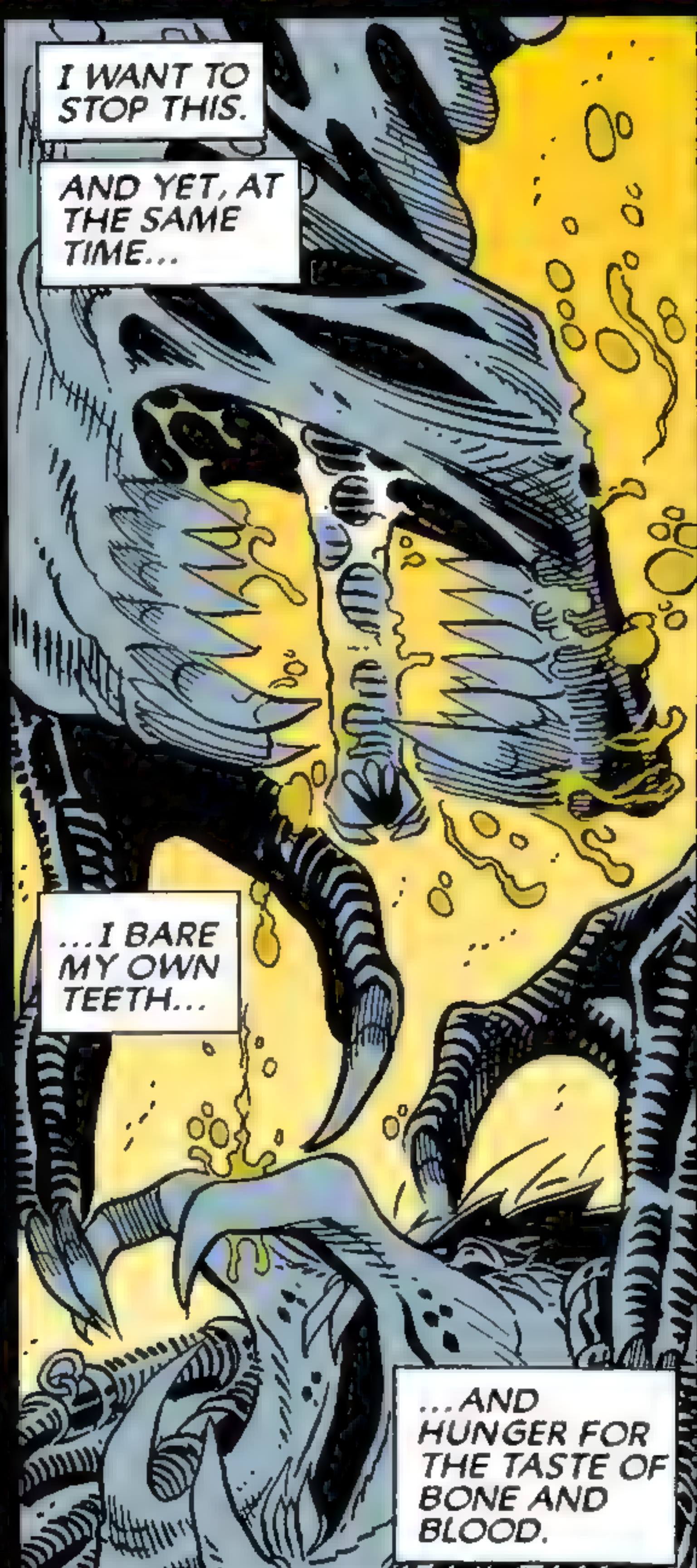
IT WAS THE ONLY
WAY I COULD THINK
OF TO SAVE HER
LIFE. AND THOSE OF
THE TWO HUMAN
CAPTIVES:

MARIA DeMEDICI
AND SOME TROOPER,
PART OF THE STATION
DEFENSE CADRE.



MY REASONING.
NOT THE QUEEN'S.

FOR HER, THE
ONLY GOOD
FOE'S A DEAD
ONE.

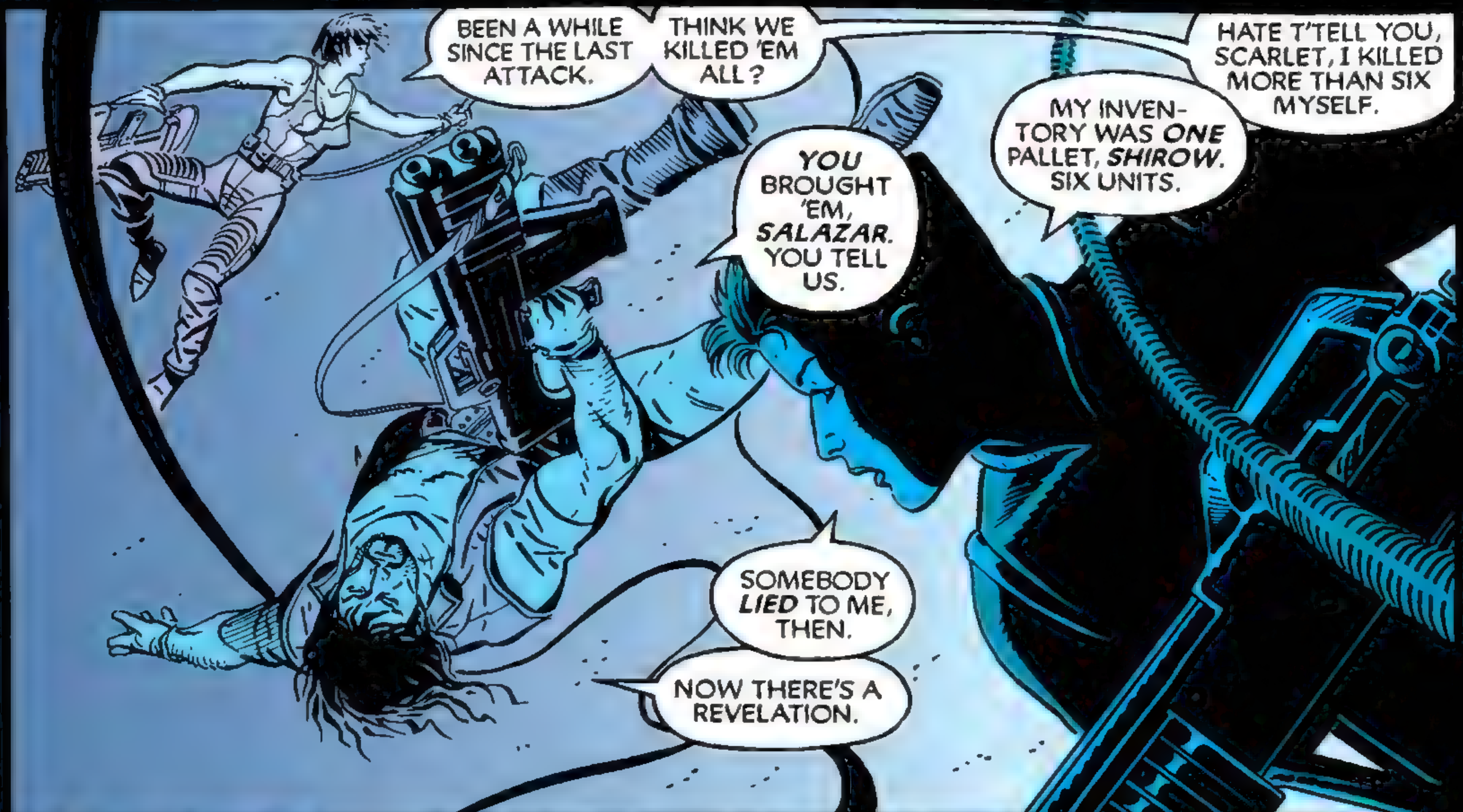


I WANT TO
STOP THIS.

AND YET, AT
THE SAME
TIME...

...I BARE
MY OWN
TEETH...

...AND
HUNGER FOR
THE TASTE OF
BONE AND
BLOOD.



BEEN A WHILE
SINCE THE LAST
ATTACK.

THINK WE
KILLED 'EM
ALL?

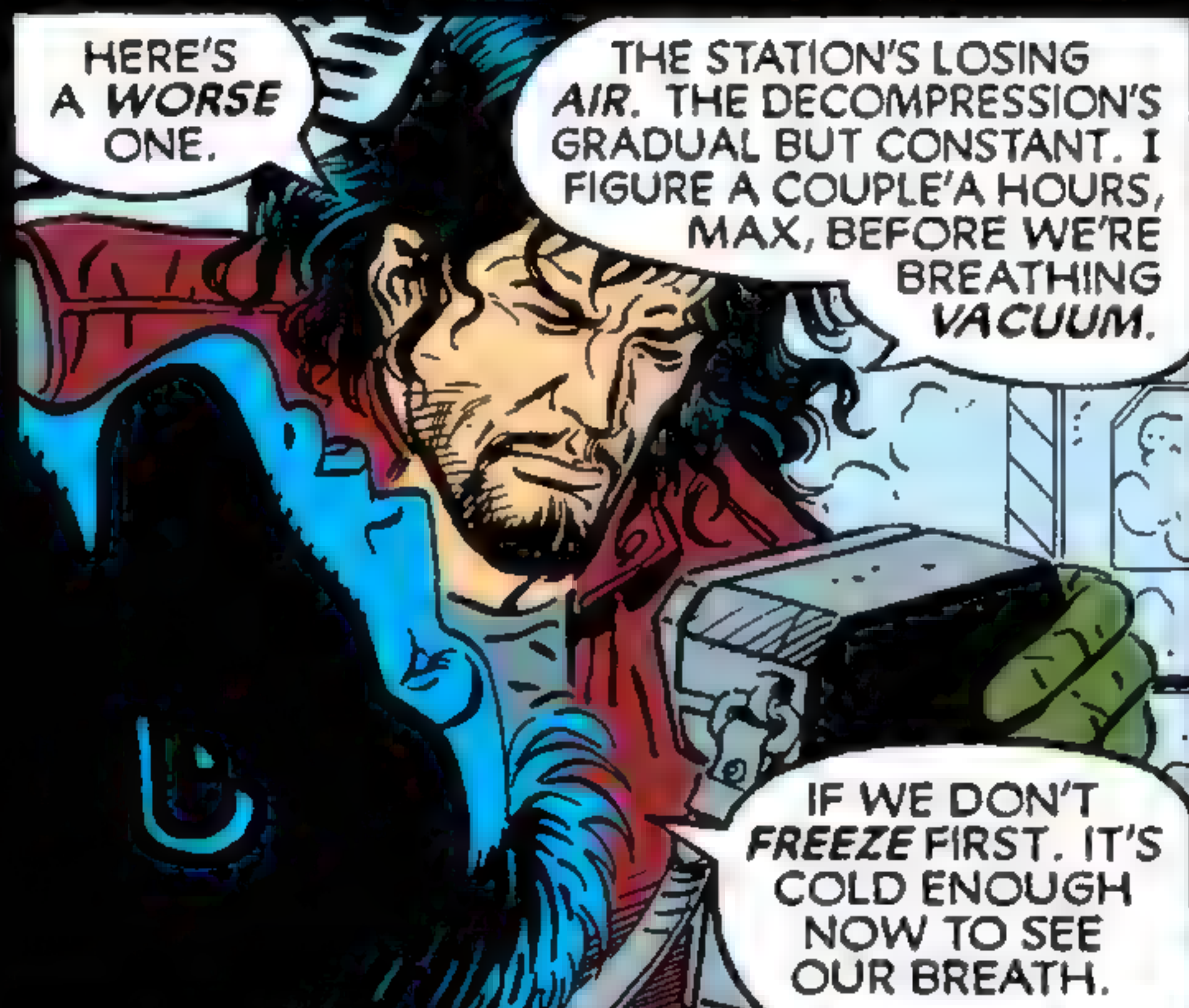
HATE T'TELL YOU,
SCARLET, I KILLED
MORE THAN SIX
MYSELF.

MY INVEN-
TORY WAS ONE
PALLET, *SHIROW*.
SIX UNITS.

YOU
BROUGHT
'EM,
SALAZAR.
YOU TELL
US.

SOMEBODY
LIED TO ME,
THEN.

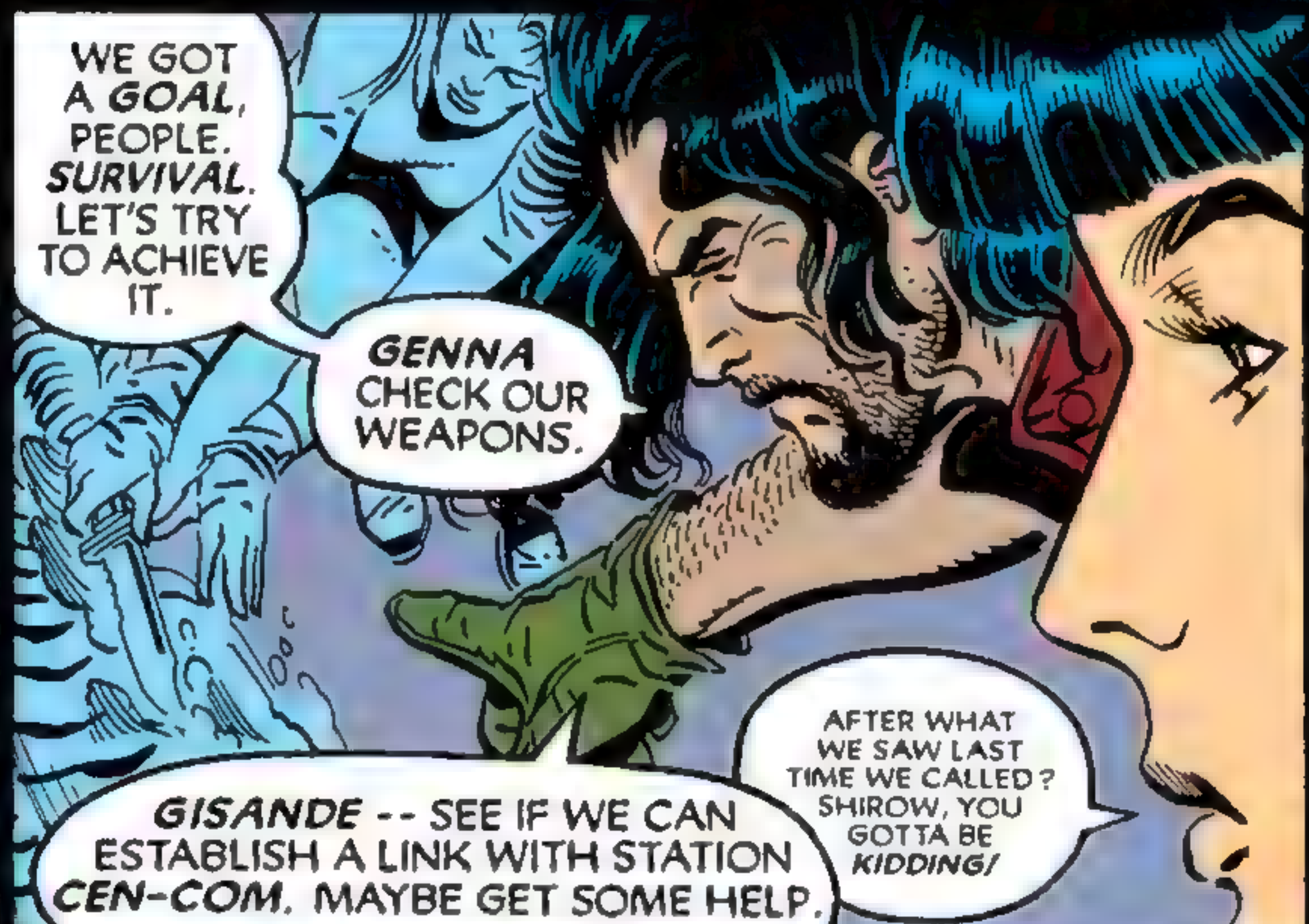
NOW THERE'S A
REVELATION.



HERE'S
A WORSE
ONE.

THE STATION'S LOSING
AIR. THE DECOMPRESSION'S
GRADUAL BUT CONSTANT. I
FIGURE A COUPLE'A HOURS,
MAX, BEFORE WE'RE
BREATHING
VACUUM.

IF WE DON'T
FREEZE FIRST. IT'S
COLD ENOUGH
NOW TO SEE
OUR BREATH.



WE GOT
A GOAL,
PEOPLE.
SURVIVAL.
LET'S TRY
TO ACHIEVE
IT.

GENNA
CHECK OUR
WEAPONS.

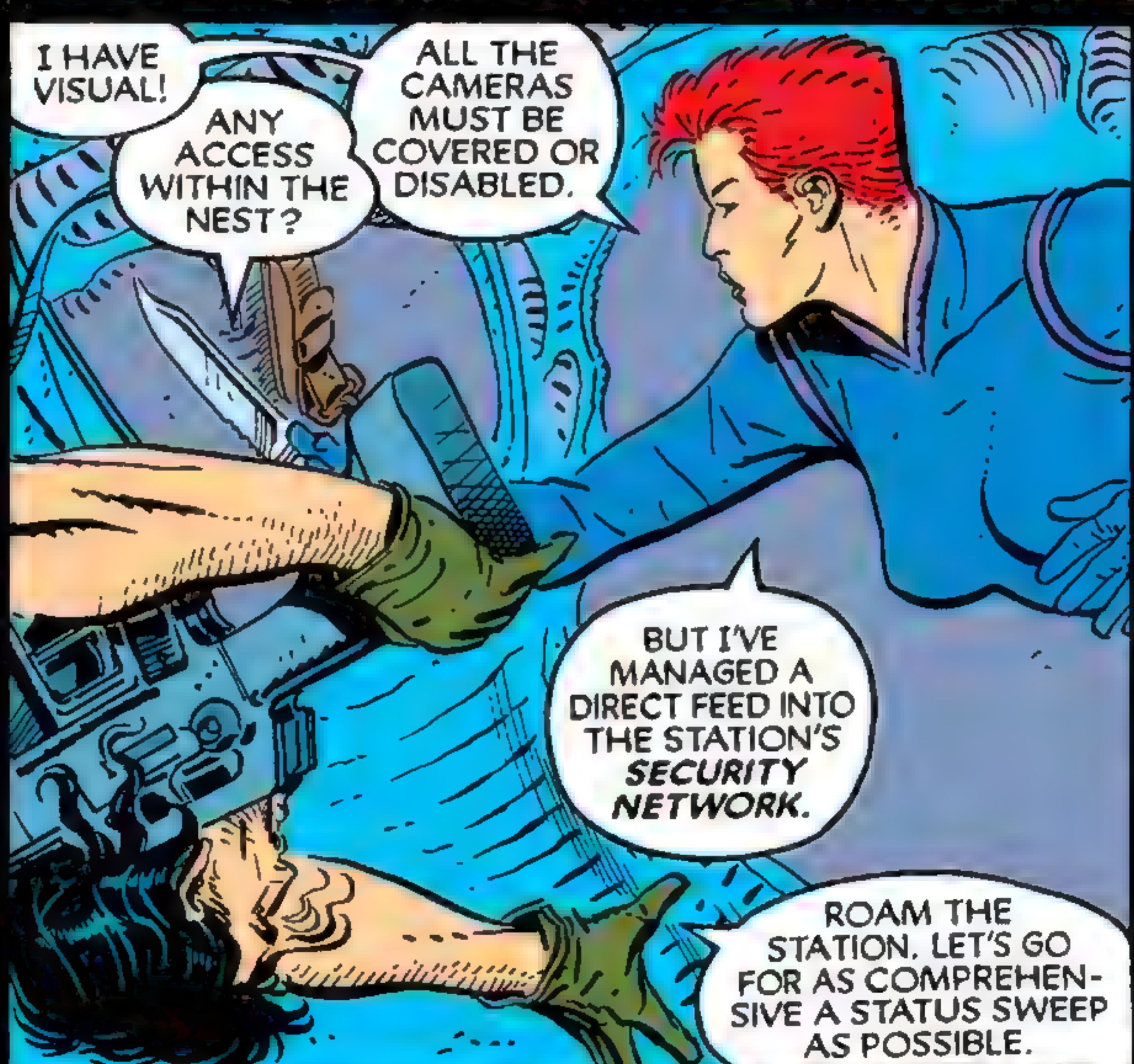
AFTER WHAT
WE SAW LAST
TIME WE CALLED?
SHIROW, YOU
GOTTA BE
KIDDING!

GISANDE -- SEE IF WE CAN
ESTABLISH A LINK WITH STATION
CEN-COM. MAYBE GET SOME HELP.



I CANNIBALIZED
EVERYTHING. FOR
WHAT IT'S WORTH.

TWO FULL MAGA-
ZINES FOR THE PULSE
RIFLES, PLUS A HALF-
DOZEN GRENADES. PLUS
A MAG AND CHANGE
FOR THE PISTOL.



I HAVE
VISUAL!

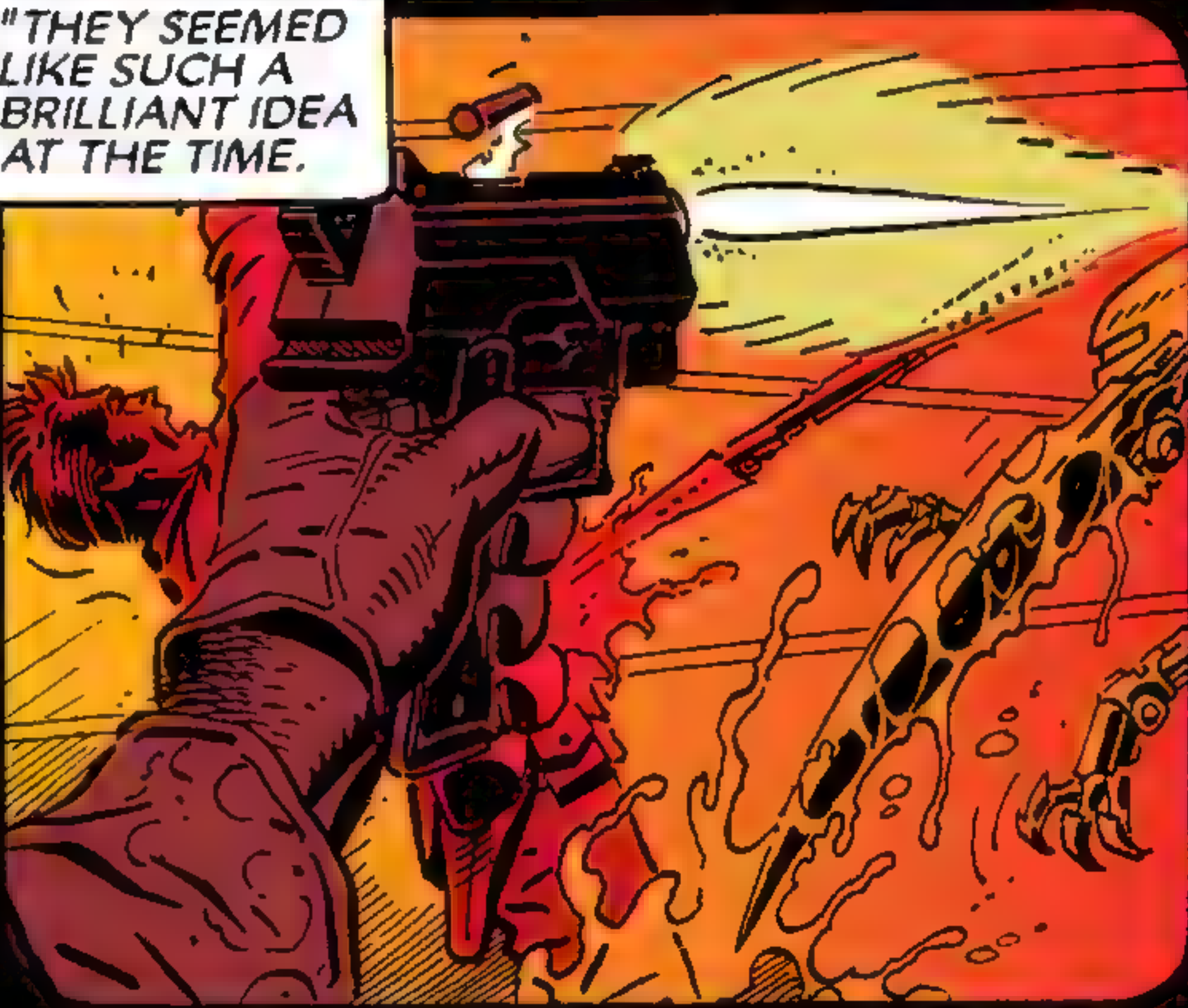
ANY
ACCESS
WITHIN THE
NEST?

ALL THE
CAMERAS
MUST BE
COVERED OR
DISABLED.

BUT I'VE
MANAGED A
DIRECT FEED INTO
THE STATION'S
SECURITY
NETWORK.

ROOM THE
STATION. LET'S GO
FOR AS COMPREHEN-
SIVE A STATUS SWEEP
AS POSSIBLE.

"THEY SEEMED LIKE SUCH A BRILLIANT IDEA AT THE TIME."



"CERAMIC ARMOR, ESPECIALLY RESISTANT TO THE ALIENS' ACID BLOOD."



"DESIGNED TO FUNCTION IN ANY ENVIRONMENT, NO MATTER HOW HOSTILE."



"THEY'RE PROGRAMMED TO KILL, PURE AND SIMPLE, UNTIL THEY RUN OUT OF VIABLE TARGETS."

THE CONCEPT WAS TO TURN THEM LOOSE INSIDE AN ALIEN NEST, TO SCOUR IT CLEAN.



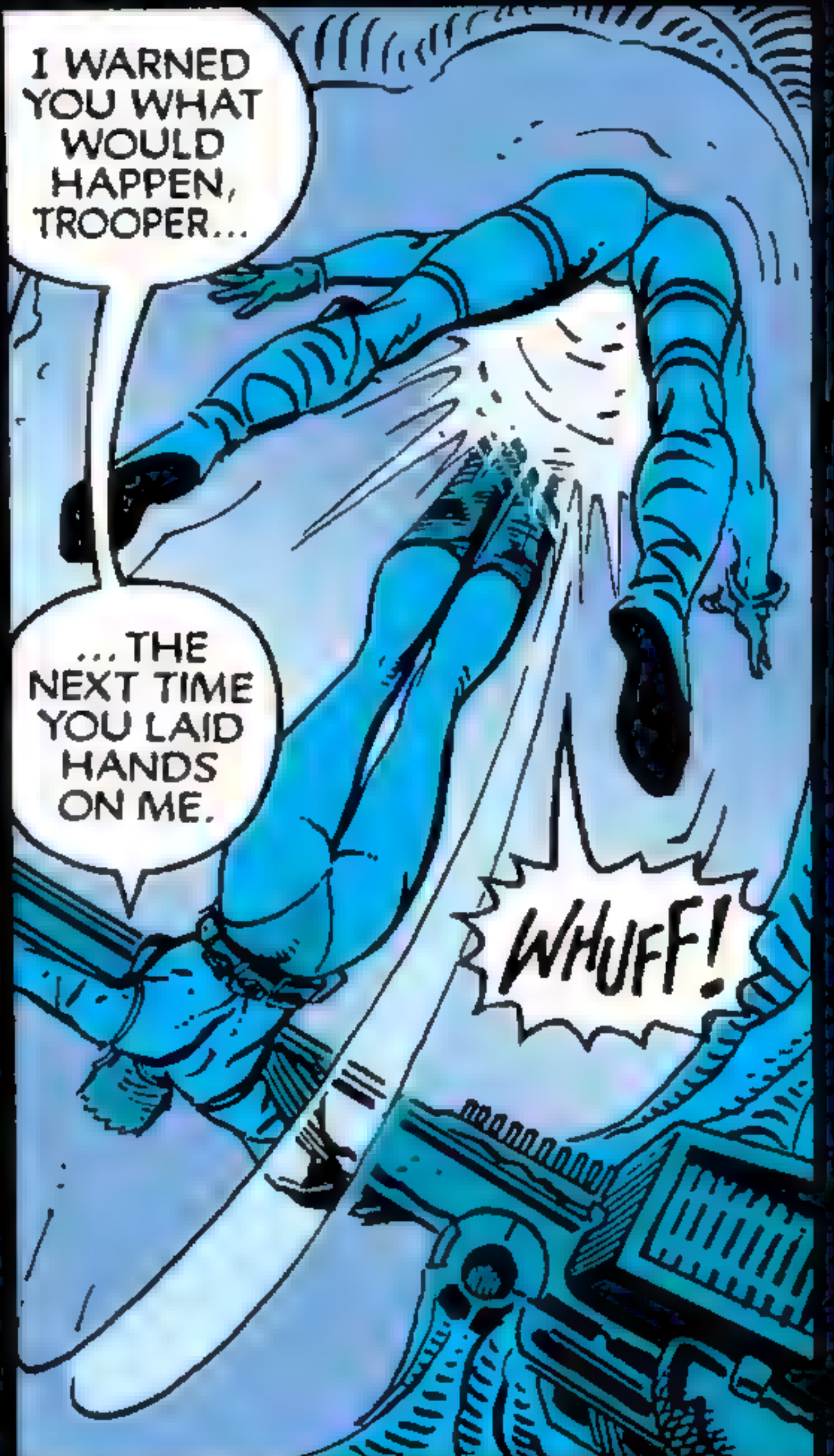
YOU HEARTLESS CORPORATE BITCH!



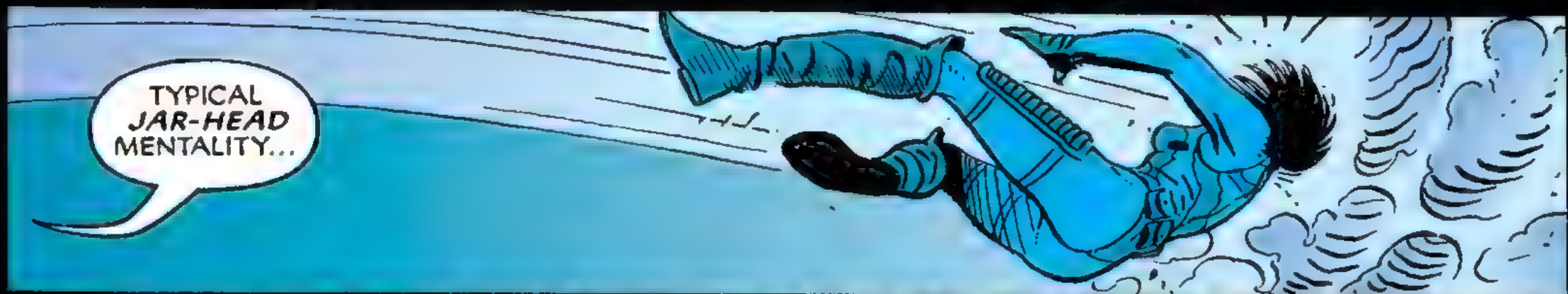
THOSE "TARGETS" ARE MY NEIGHBORS, THOSE ARE MY FRIENDS!

I WARNED YOU WHAT WOULD HAPPEN, TROOPER...

... THE NEXT TIME YOU LAID HANDS ON ME.



WHUFF!



TYPICAL
JAR-HEAD
MENTALITY...



...YOU HAVE
TO LEARN
EVERYTHING THE
HARD WAY.



STOP IT,
THE BOTH
OF YOU!

DAMNATION,
SALAZAR! FROM
YOU, ESPECIALLY,
I EXPECTED BET-
TER THAN THIS!



WE'RE IN THIS
TOGETHER,
LADIES.

OUR ONLY
HOPE IS TO
FUNCTION
AS A TEAM.

YOU WANT
TO FULFILL A
PRIVATE AGENDA,
SAVE IT FOR
ANOTHER
DAY.

ASSUMING
WE LIVE SO
LONG.



LATER, SLAG. THAT'S A PROMISE.

I'LL BE SURE TO
HOLD YOU TO IT,
TROOPER.

LIFESIGNS ON
THE SECRET ARE
FEW AND FAR BE-
TWEEN. THERE ISN'T
EVEN A GHOST
OF ORGANIZED
RESISTANCE.

IT WON'T BE
LONG BEFORE THEY
COME AFTER US.



I MARK VIABLE
LIFESIGNS CLOSE
ABOARD --

-- SAME
PATTERNS
WE SPOTTED
BEFORE, IN
THE SAME
LOCATION.

IF IT'S
OUR PEOPLE,
SHIROW,
CHANCES ARE
THE ALIEN'S
WITH THEM.

THEY'RE
ALIVE,
GISANDE,
THAT'S WHAT
MATTERS.

SO LONG
AS THAT'S
TRUE, I'M
NOT
ABOUT TO
WALK
AWAY.



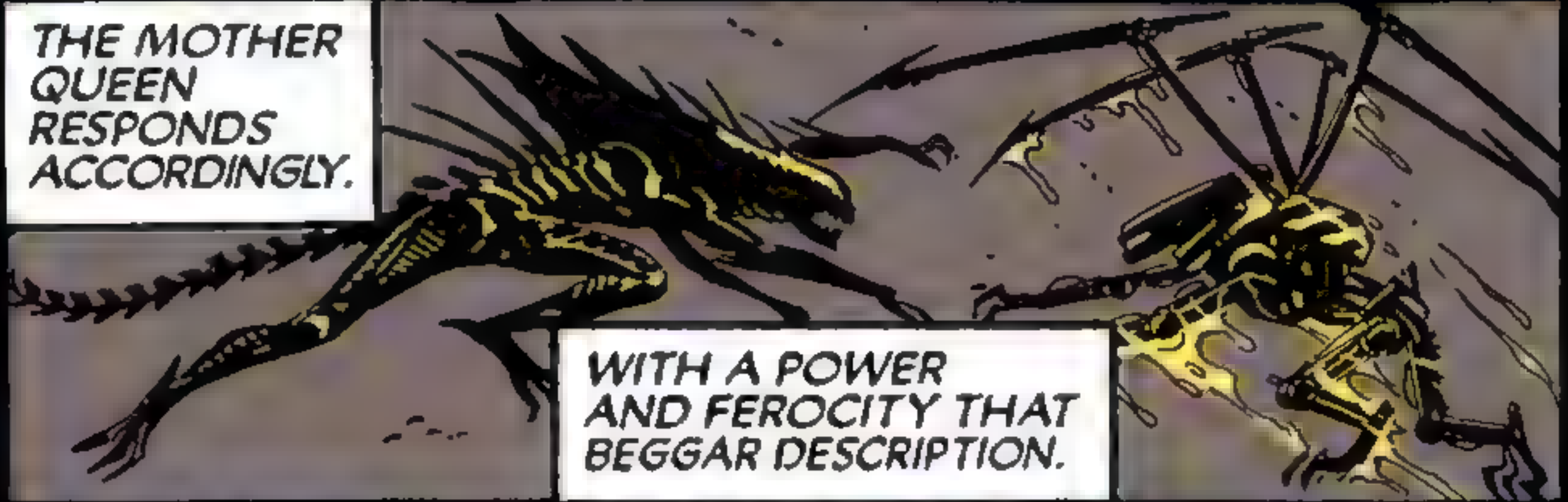
EVENTS
HAPPEN SO
FAST, I CAN
BARELY KEEP
TRACK.

AS THE MOTHER
QUEEN ATTACKS
BIG MAMA...



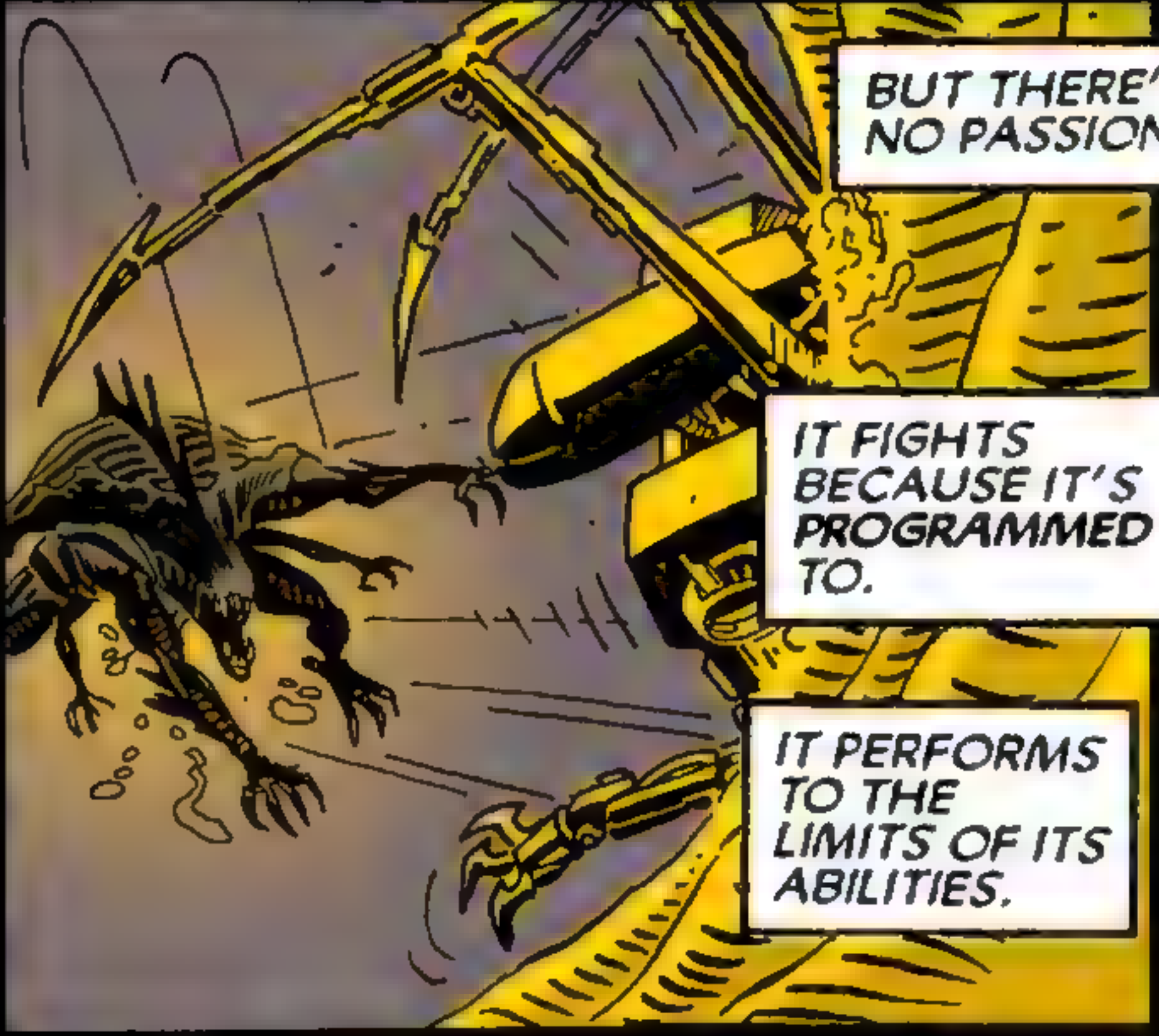
... ONE OF
GISANDE
SALAZAR'S
TECSEKS
CATCHES UP
WITH US.

IT'S THE
PREEMINENT
THREAT.



THE MOTHER
QUEEN
RESPONDS
ACCORDINGLY.

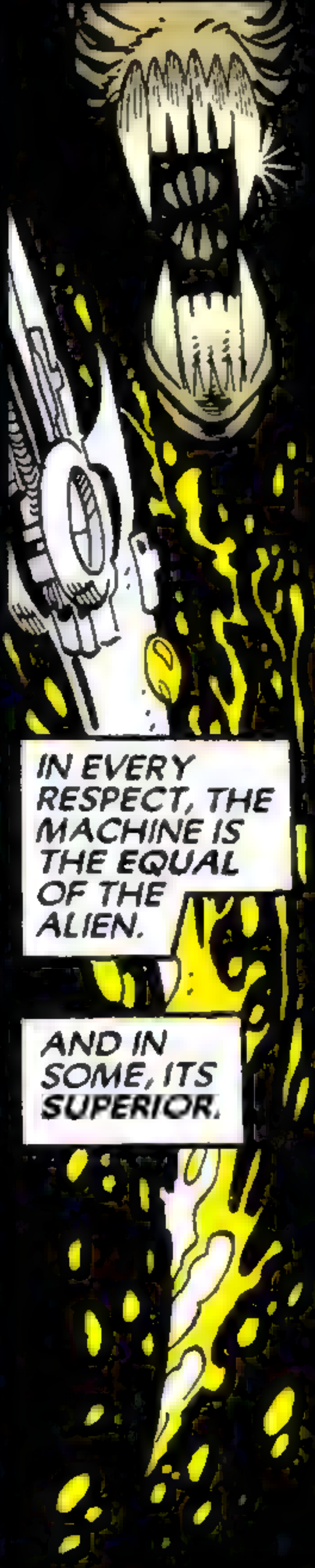
WITH A POWER
AND FEROCITY THAT
BEGGAR DESCRIPTION.



BUT THERE'S
NO PASSION.

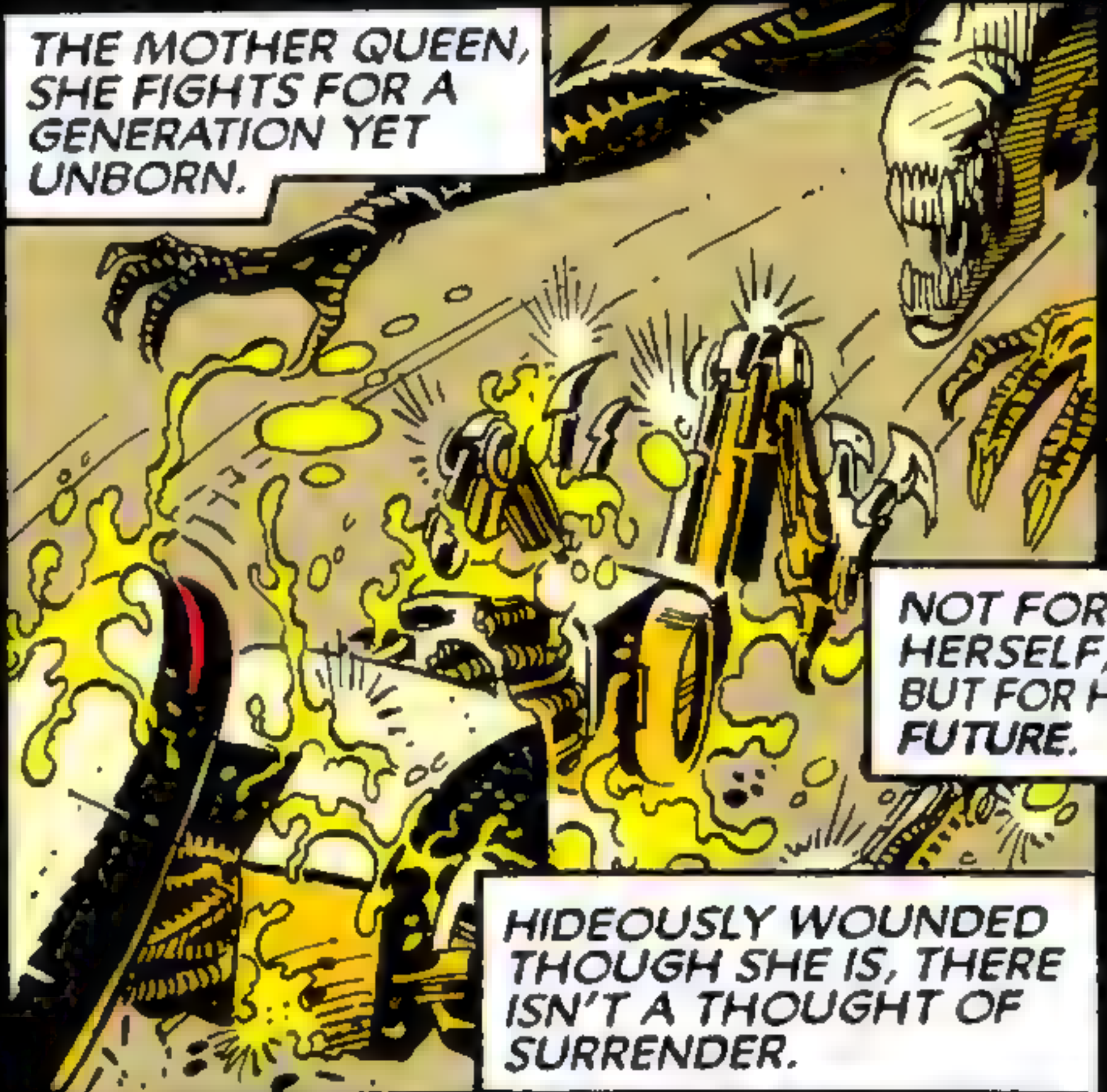
IT FIGHTS
BECAUSE IT'S
PROGRAMMED
TO.

IT PERFORMS
TO THE
LIMITS OF ITS
ABILITIES.



IN EVERY
RESPECT, THE
MACHINE IS
THE EQUAL
OF THE
ALIEN.

AND IN
SOME, ITS
SUPERIOR.



THE MOTHER QUEEN,
SHE FIGHTS FOR A
GENERATION YET
UNBORN.

NOT FOR
HERSELF,
BUT FOR HER
FUTURE.

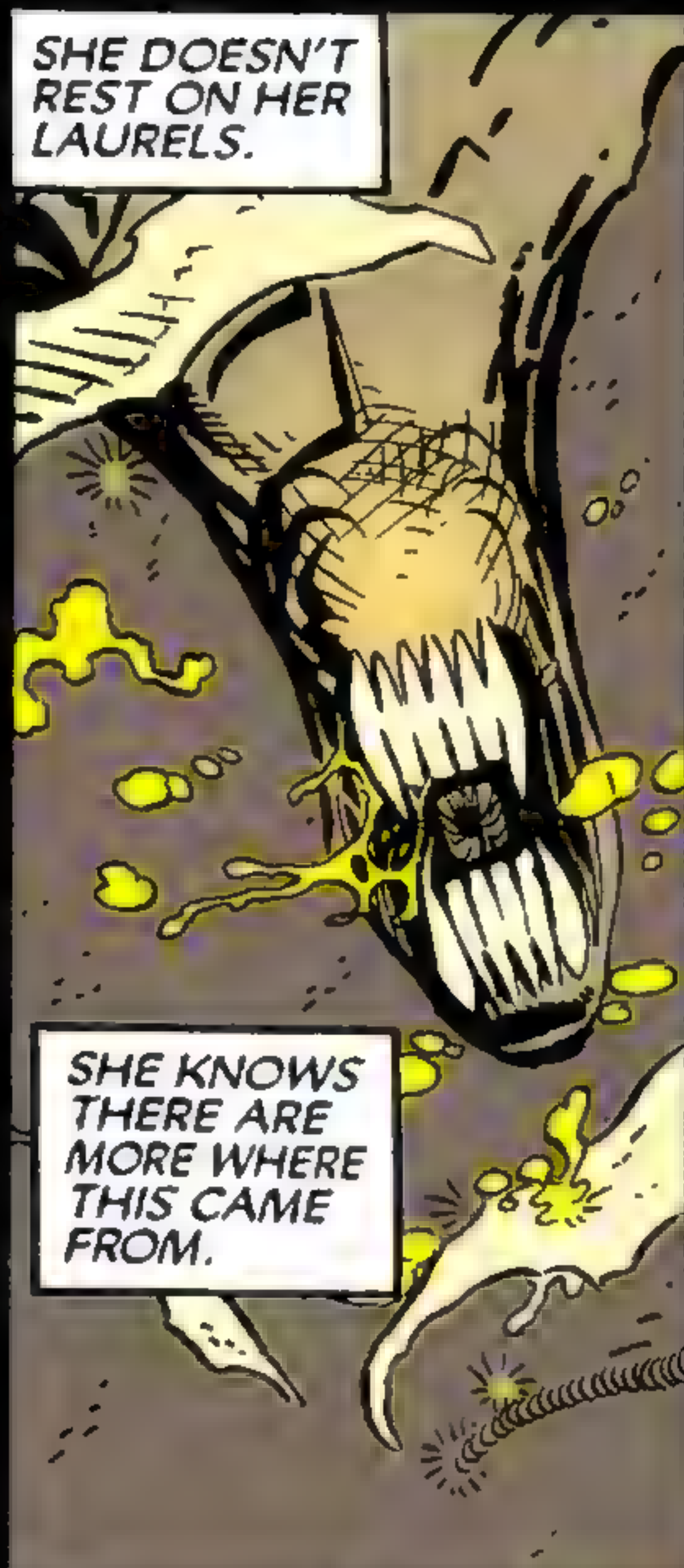
HIDEOUSLY WOUNDED
THOUGH SHE IS, THERE
ISN'T A THOUGHT OF
SURRENDER.



IN A SENSE, IN THESE
CIRCUMSTANCES,
SHE HAS NO
LIMITS.

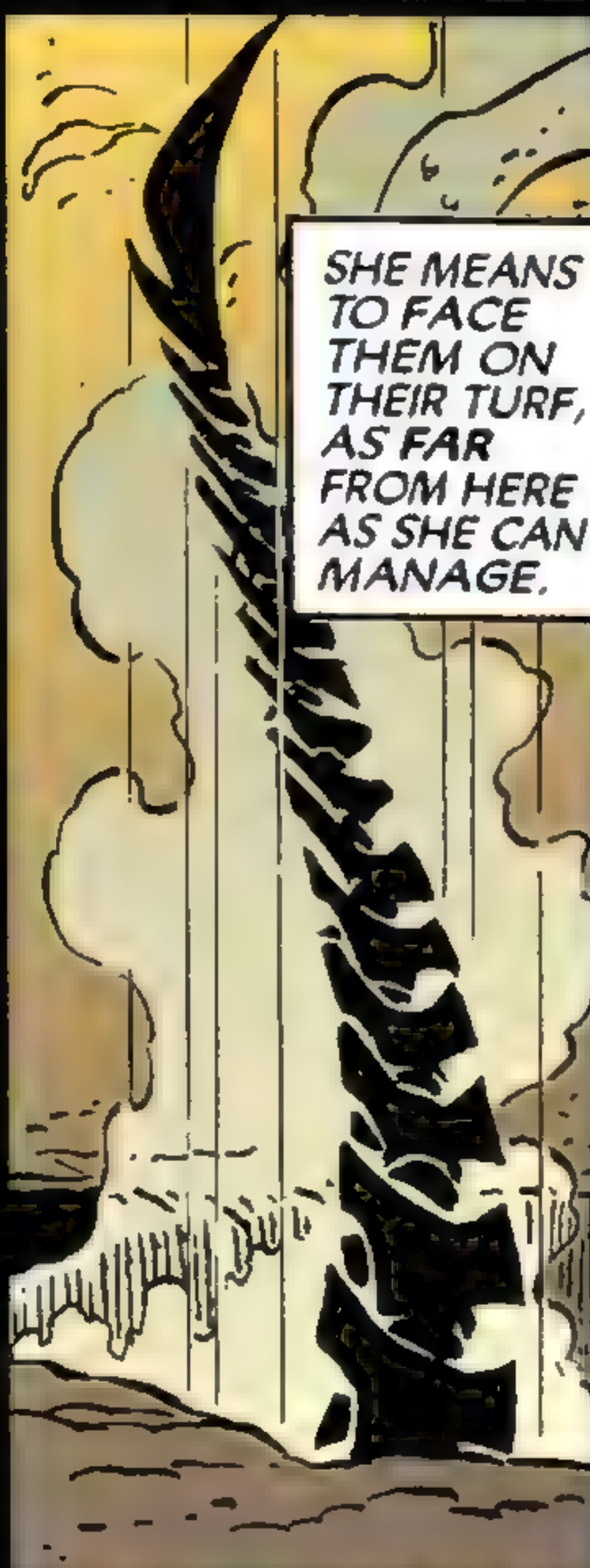
I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD
ALL BE GRATEFUL.

SHE DOESN'T
REST ON HER
LAURELS.



SHE KNOWS
THERE ARE
MORE WHERE
THIS CAME
FROM.

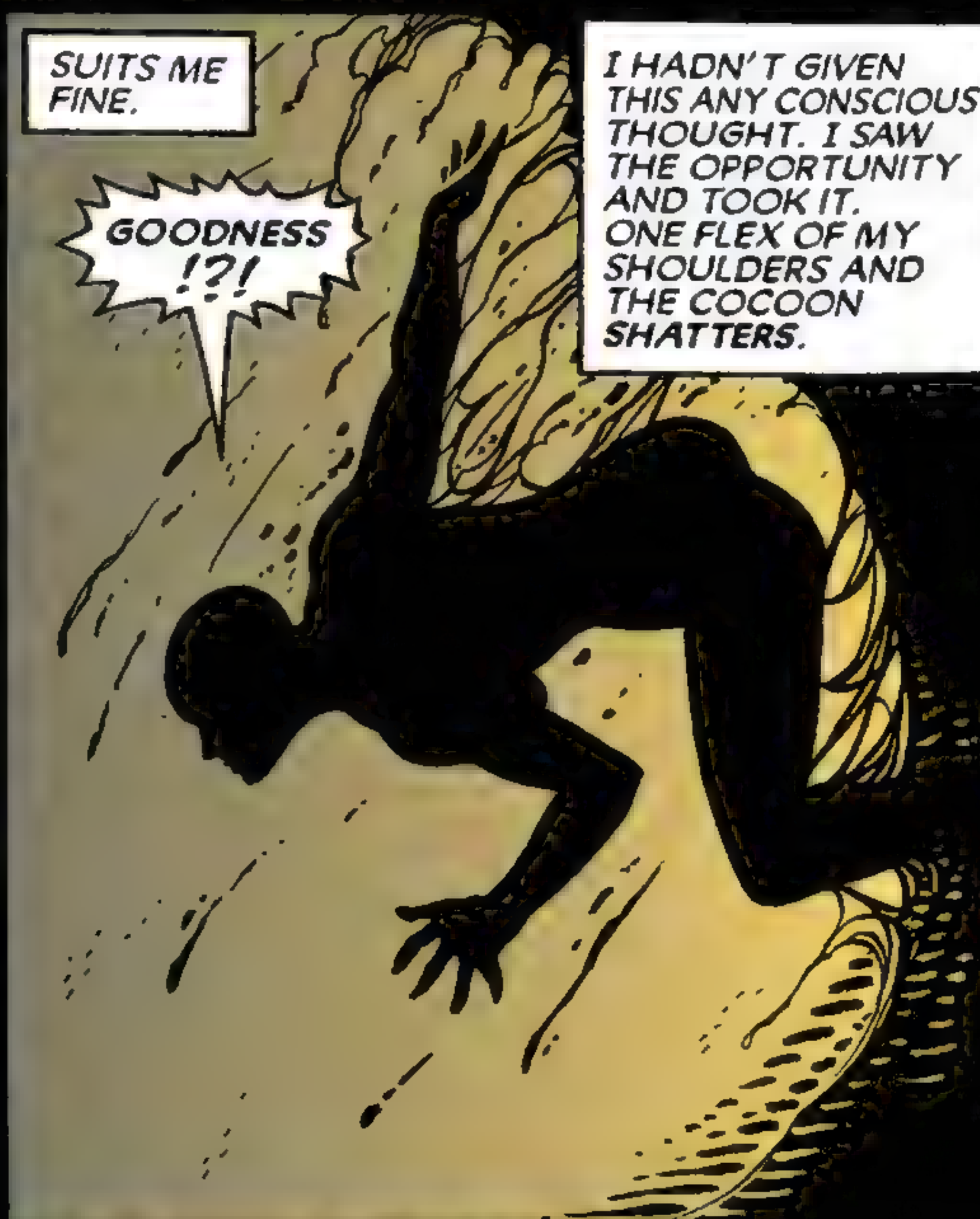
SHE MEANS
TO FACE
THEM ON
THEIR TURF,
AS FAR
FROM HERE
AS SHE CAN
MANAGE.



SUITS ME
FINE.

GOODNESS
!?!

I HADN'T GIVEN
THIS ANY CONSCIOUS
THOUGHT. I SAW
THE OPPORTUNITY
AND TOOK IT.
ONE FLEX OF MY
SHOULDERS AND
THE COCOON
SHATTERS.



ANOTHER
INFURIATING
PIECE OF
THIS EVER-
EXPANDING
PUZZLE...

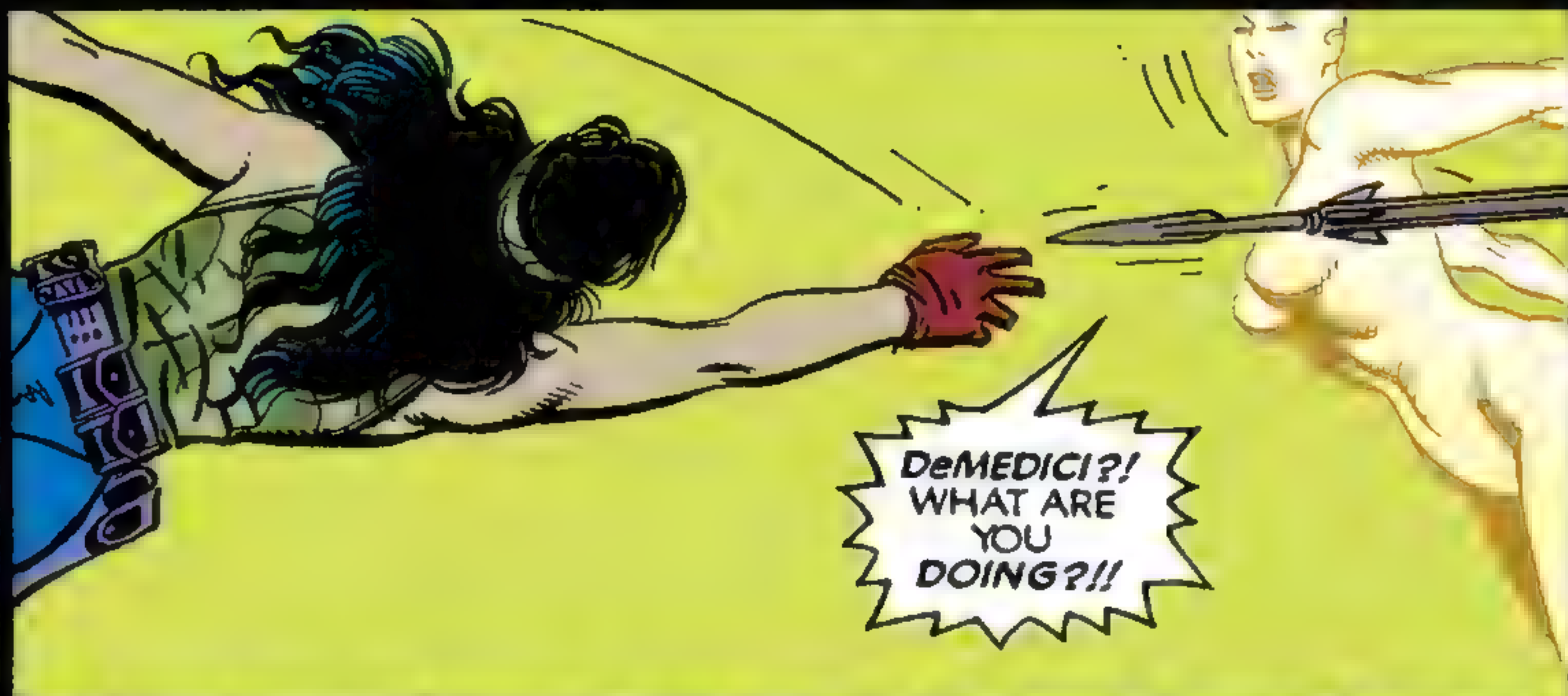


... TO GO WITH
KNOWLEDGE
AND SKILLS-- AND
WORST OF ALL,
MEMORIES-- A
TROPHY SHOULDN'T
HAVE.



MY THOUGHT WAS
TO MAKE SURE MARIA
WAS ALL RIGHT.

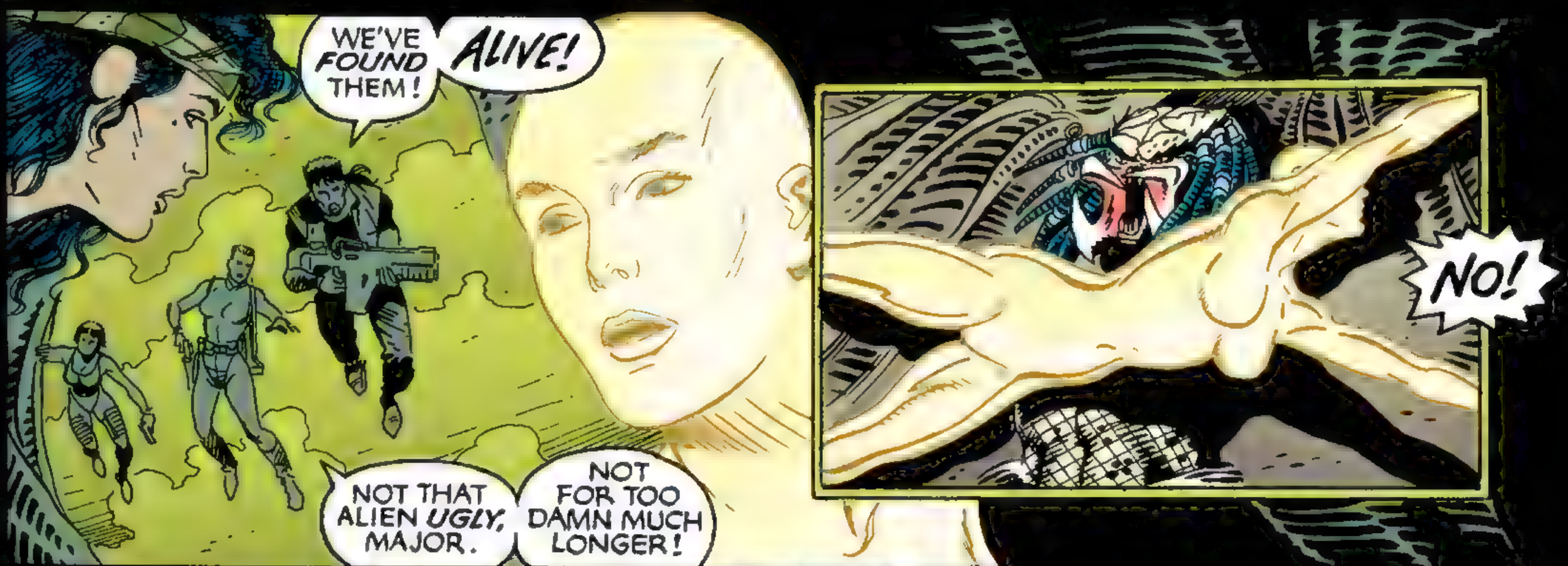
MY DISCOVERY
IS THAT I WASN'T
THE ONLY ONE
SHAMMING.



DeMEDICI?!
WHAT ARE
YOU
DOING?!!

I'M NOT
YOUR
ENEMY,
MARIA.





WE'VE FOUND THEM!

ALIVE!

NOT THAT ALIEN UGLY, MAJOR.

NOT FOR TOO DAMN MUCH LONGER!

NO!

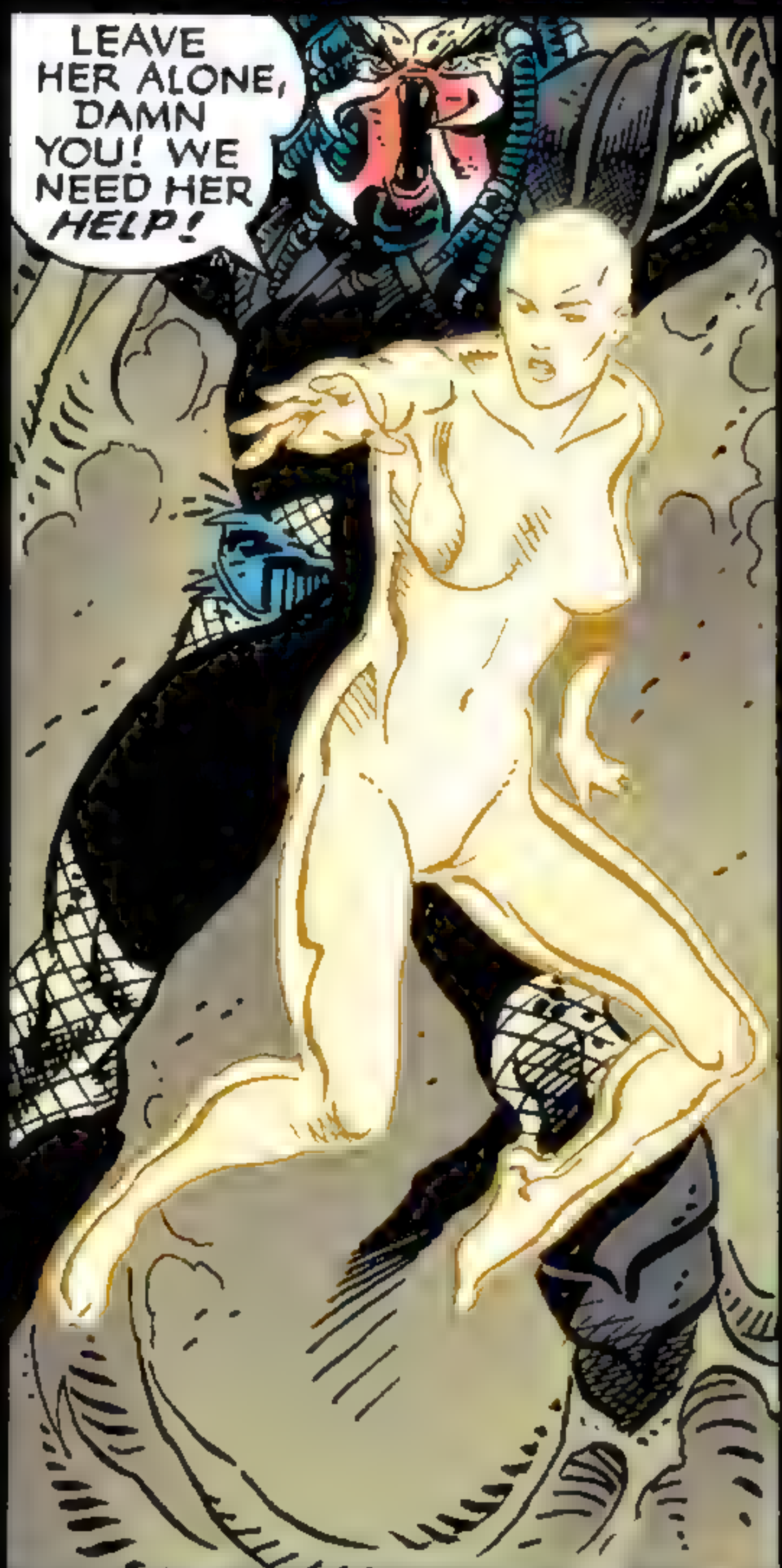


DON'T SHOOT, DAMMIT!



OW!

KRAH!!



LEAVE HER ALONE, DAMN YOU! WE NEED HER HELP!



MY GOD-- CARYN-- WHAT'S HAPPENED?!

BE REAL, SHIROW. YOU'RE A STRIKE-FORCE RANGER. YOU KNOW BETTER THAN MOST.

YOU'RE "BUG-BIT," AREN'T YOU, TROPHY?

BEST FOR US ALL TO WAX HER AND THE UGLY BOTH.

THAT HAS MY VOTE.



DO THAT, AND YOU LOSE MAYBE OUR ONLY CHANCE OUT OF HERE.



TO SURVIVE,
TO ESCAPE,
WE NEED
EVERY
RESOURCE.

YOU'RE
BUG-BIT!



THAT'S RIGHT. I CARRY THE MOTHER
QUEEN'S **LAST EMBRYO**.

THAT MAY
BE THE **ONLY**
THING THAT'LL
PROTECT US
WHEN SHE
COMES BACK.



WE STAY,
BIG MAMA,
WE **DIE**.

IF TECSEKS DON'T
GET US, THE
VACUUM WILL.

PURE AND
SIMPLE.

THERE'S ONE
WAY OUT LEFT
TO US. **YOUR**
SHIP.



LISTEN TO
ME! PLEASE!
YOU KNOW
I'M **RIGHT!**

WE NEED
YOU TO BRING
THE **SHIP**
HERE!

BUT YOU
NEED **US** AS
WELL! YOU CAN'T
REACH THE **SHIP**
ALONE, NOT AGAINST
TECSEKS AND
THE **MOTHER**
QUEEN.



NEED... YOU...
PURE AND
SIMPLE--

--ASH...
PARNALL?

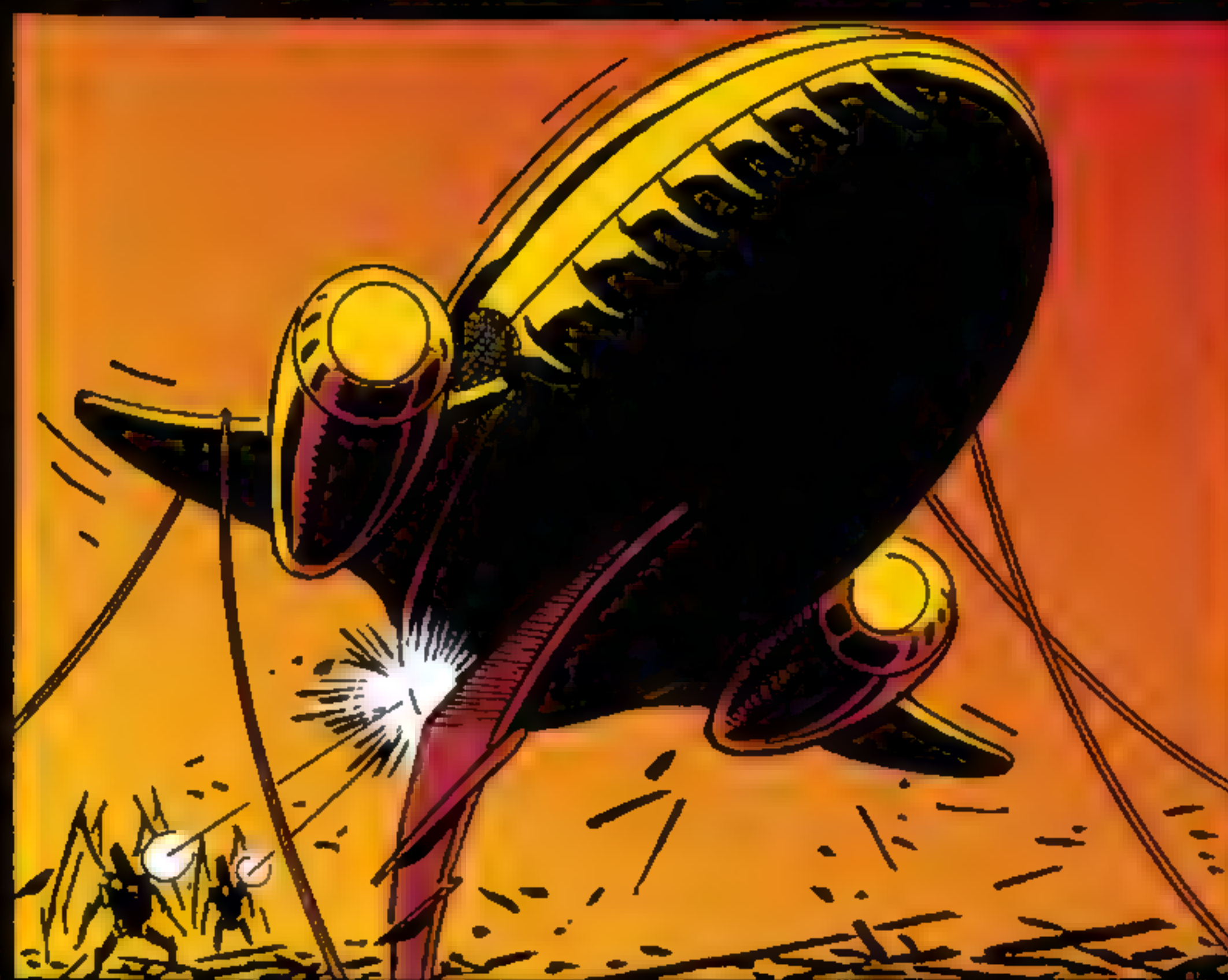
I'M
SORRY.

ALWAYS
THE SAME
QUESTION, ALWAYS
THE SAME
ANSWER.

I DON'T
KNOW.

DAMN... YOU,
TROPHY!

BIP BEEP BAP
BIP HITTLE
SQUAWK





THE
SHIP'S
CLEAR.

WHERE
DO YOU
WANT IT TO
MEET US?

WE'RE TOO
DEEP INSIDE THE
NEST FOR THE SHIP
TO PUNCH ITS WAY
THROUGH TO US.
IT'S TOO GREAT
A RISK.

WE'LL HAVE
TO MAKE OUR
WAY TO THE
STATION'S OUTER
HULL FOR THE
DUST-OFF.

OUTSTANDING,
COLONEL!

FIGHT OUR
WAY THROUGH
THOSE DAMN'
ROBOBUGS AND A
MOTHER QUEEN?
SOME BLOODY
HOPE!

ACTUALLY, SERGEANT, IN
THIS INSTANCE I BELIEVE
WE CAN COUNT ON THE
QUEEN AS AN ALLY.

LOOK AROUND,
PEOPLE. THERE'S JUST
THE ONE EGG, AND SHE
WAS BEING PRETTY
DAMN PARTICULAR
ABOUT WHO WAS TO
BE ITS HOST.

WHAT,
YOU FIGURE WE
PROTECT CARYN,
THE QUEEN
PROTECTS US?

THAT'S SLICING
OCCAM'S RAZOR
PRETTY DAMN
THIN, MARIA.

FOR MYSELF,
I'D AS SOON
BLOW THE PRISSEY
LITTLE TROPHY
TO BITS.

BUT I WAS
BETRAYED.
SOMEONE'S
GOING TO PAY
FOR THAT.

I SAY WE
FOLLOW
COLONEL
DeMEDICI'S
LEAD.

AND
FAST!

BECAUSE, IN
CASE NOBODY'S
NOTICED, THE AIR'S
STARTING TO GET
ANNOYINGLY *THIN*.
WE DON'T MOVE
LIKE WE'VE GOT A
PURPOSE...

...WE
WON'T BE
MOVING AT
ALL.



ONE THING ABOUT
AN ALIEN--

--YOU CAN
ALWAYS TELL
WHERE IT'S
BEEN.

BACK TO
THE DRAWING
BOARD, HUH,
MS. SALAZAR?

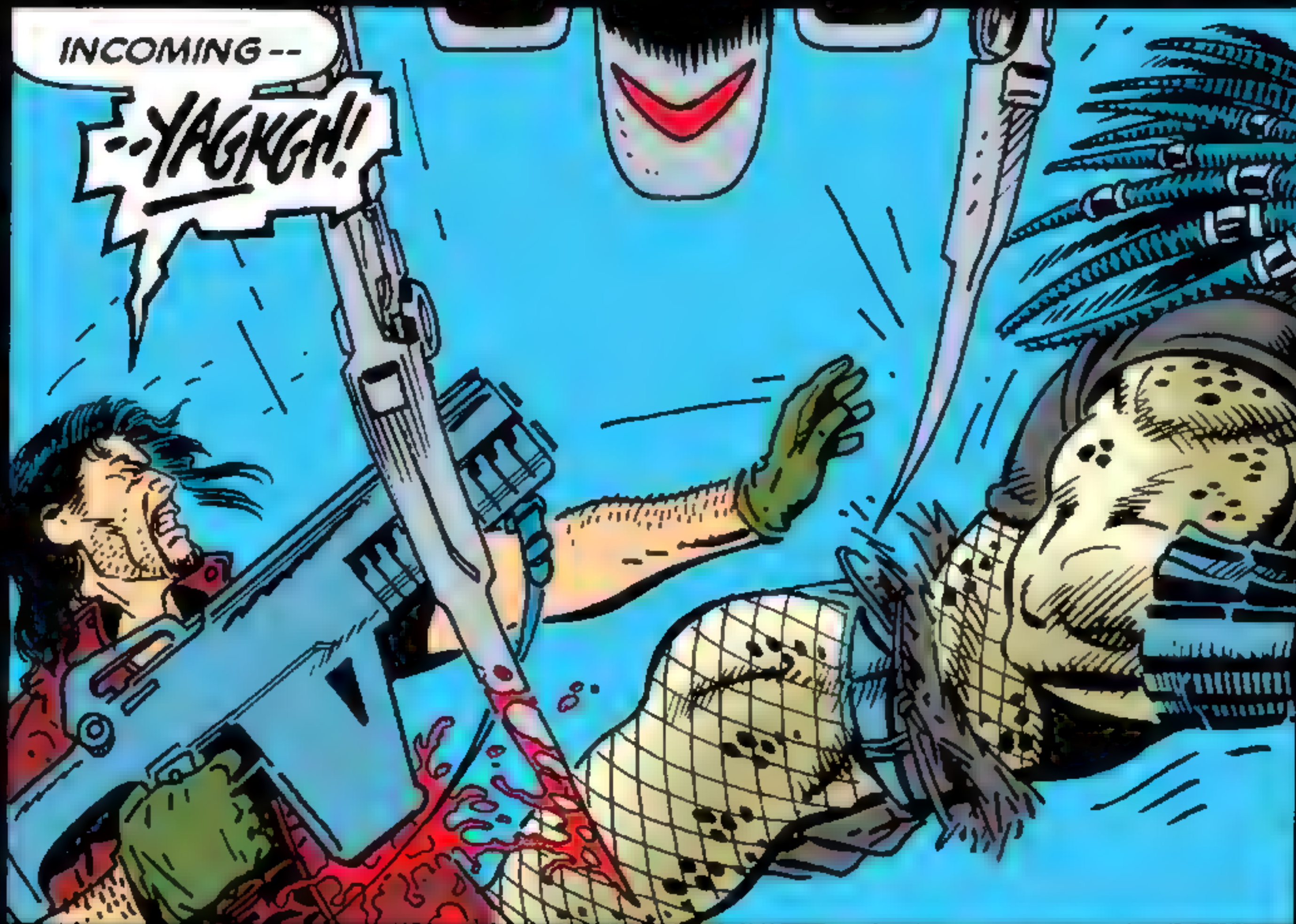
YOUR TIN
TOYBOYS
MAY'VE
WORKED FINE
IN SIMULA-
TION...

...BUT THEY
DON'T LOOK
LIKE THEY'RE
DOIN' SO HOT
AGAINST THE
REAL THING.

BE
THANKFUL
FOR SMALL
FAVORS,
TROOPER.

EACH
ONE THE
BUG BITCH
KILLS...

...IS ONE
LESS TO
THREATEN
US.



INCOMING--

--YAGKGH!



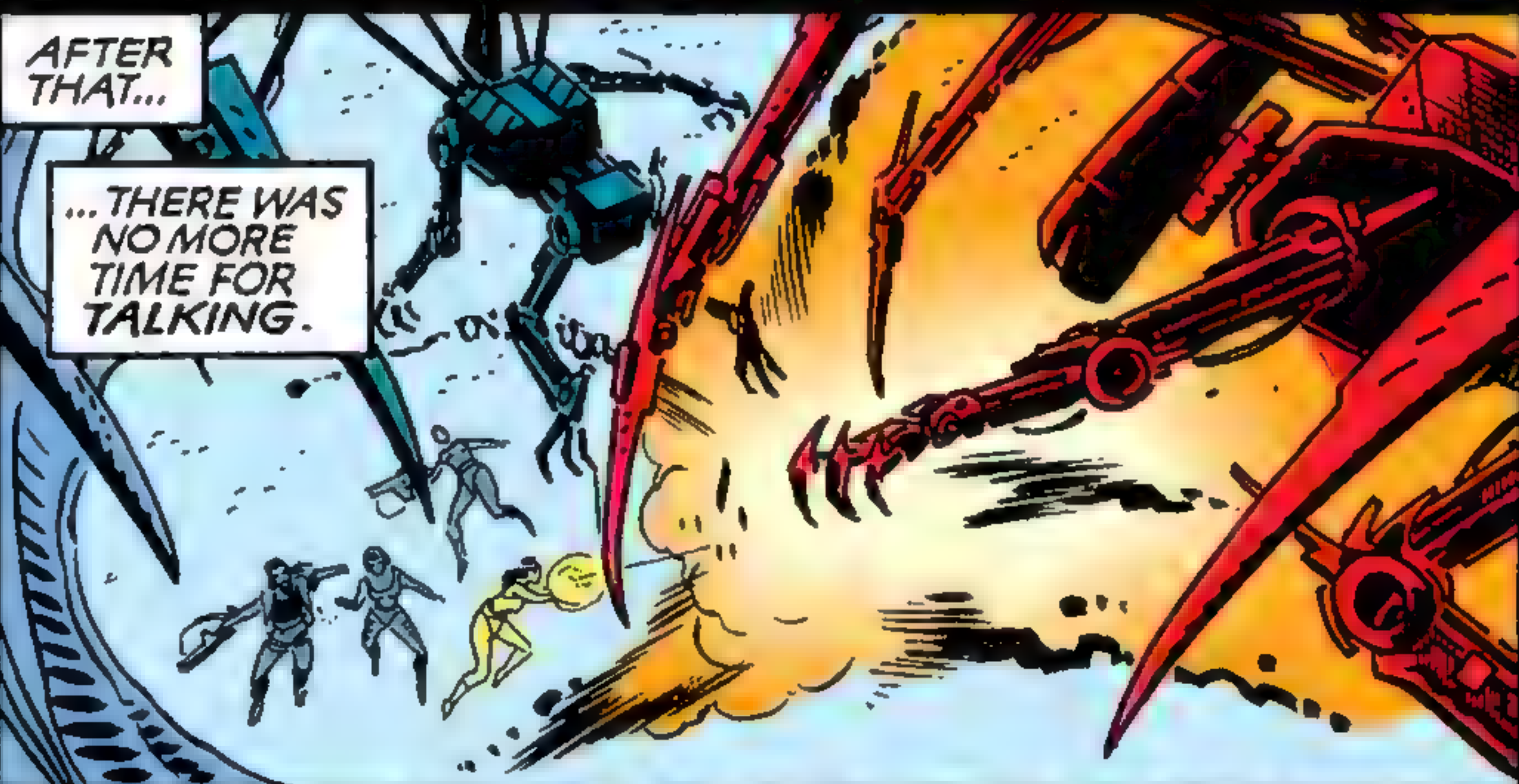
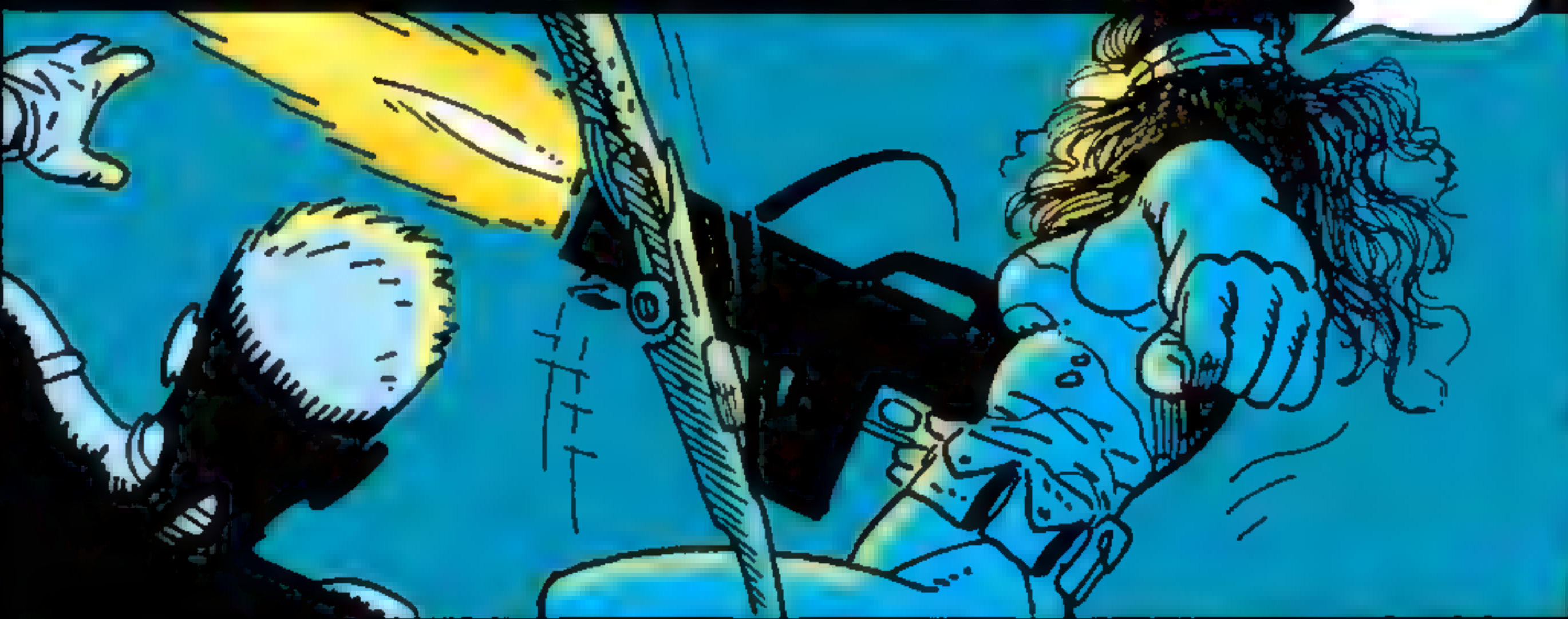
SHIROW!



HE'S A STRIKE-
FORCE RANGER,
SALAZAR.

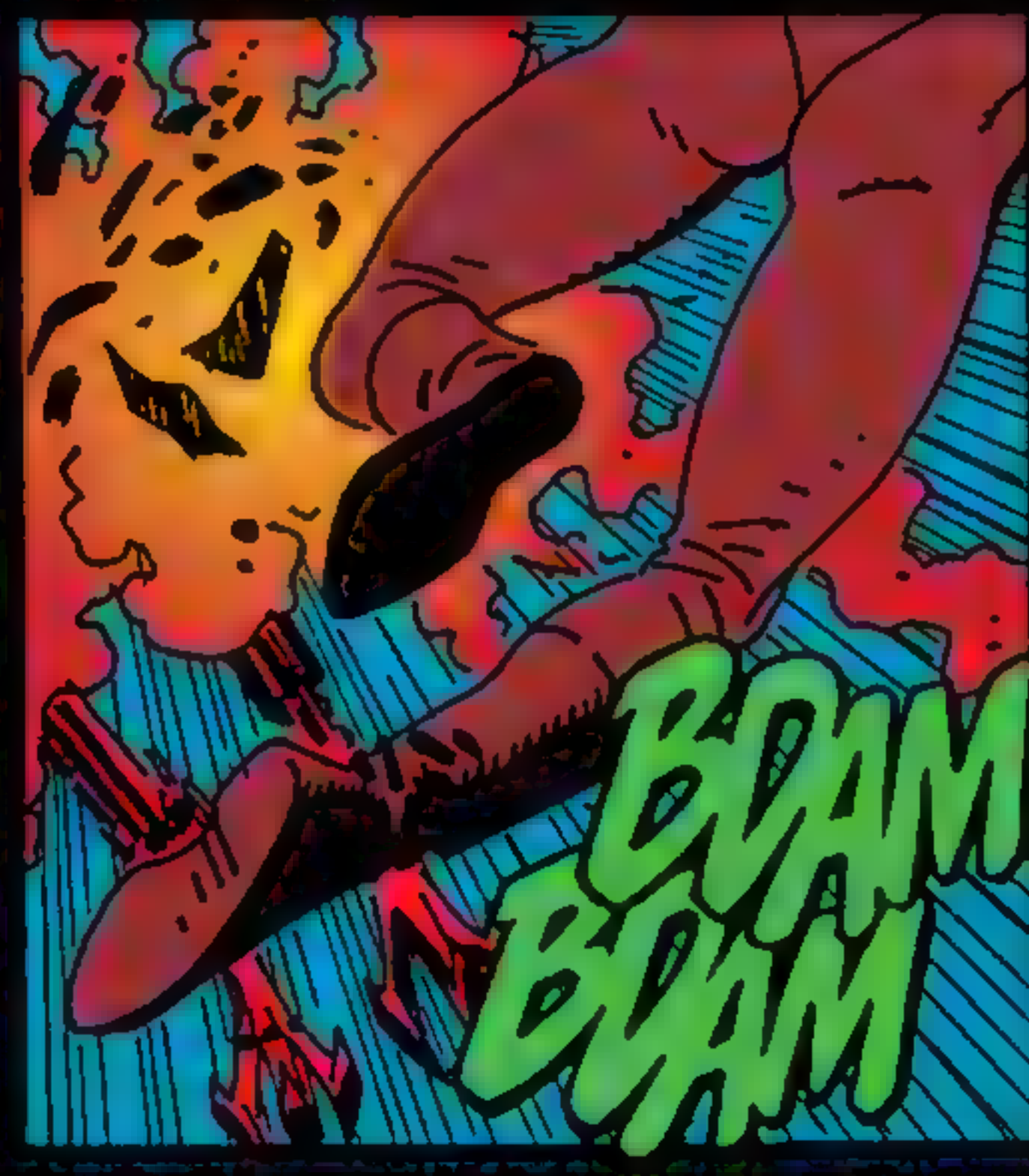
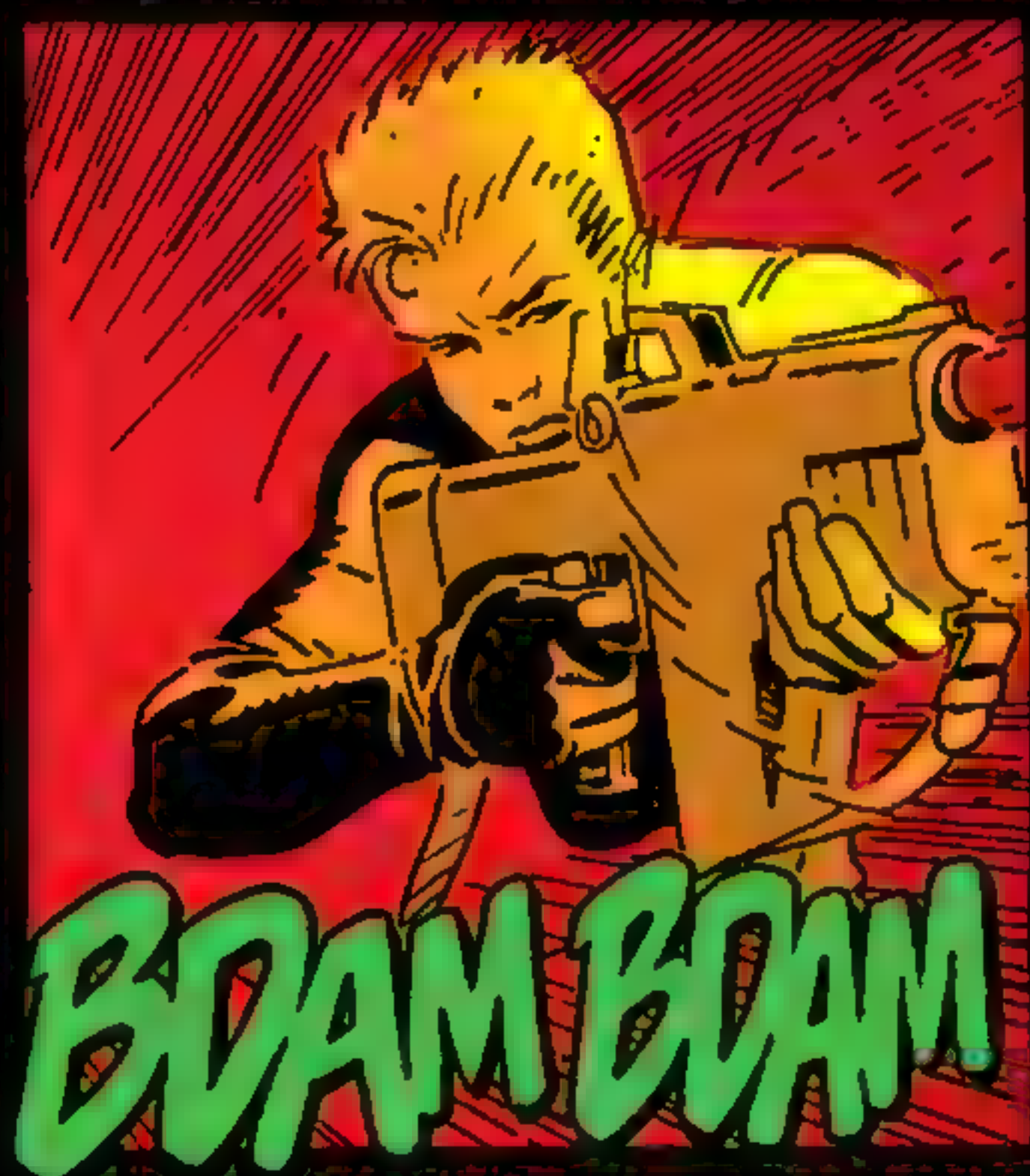
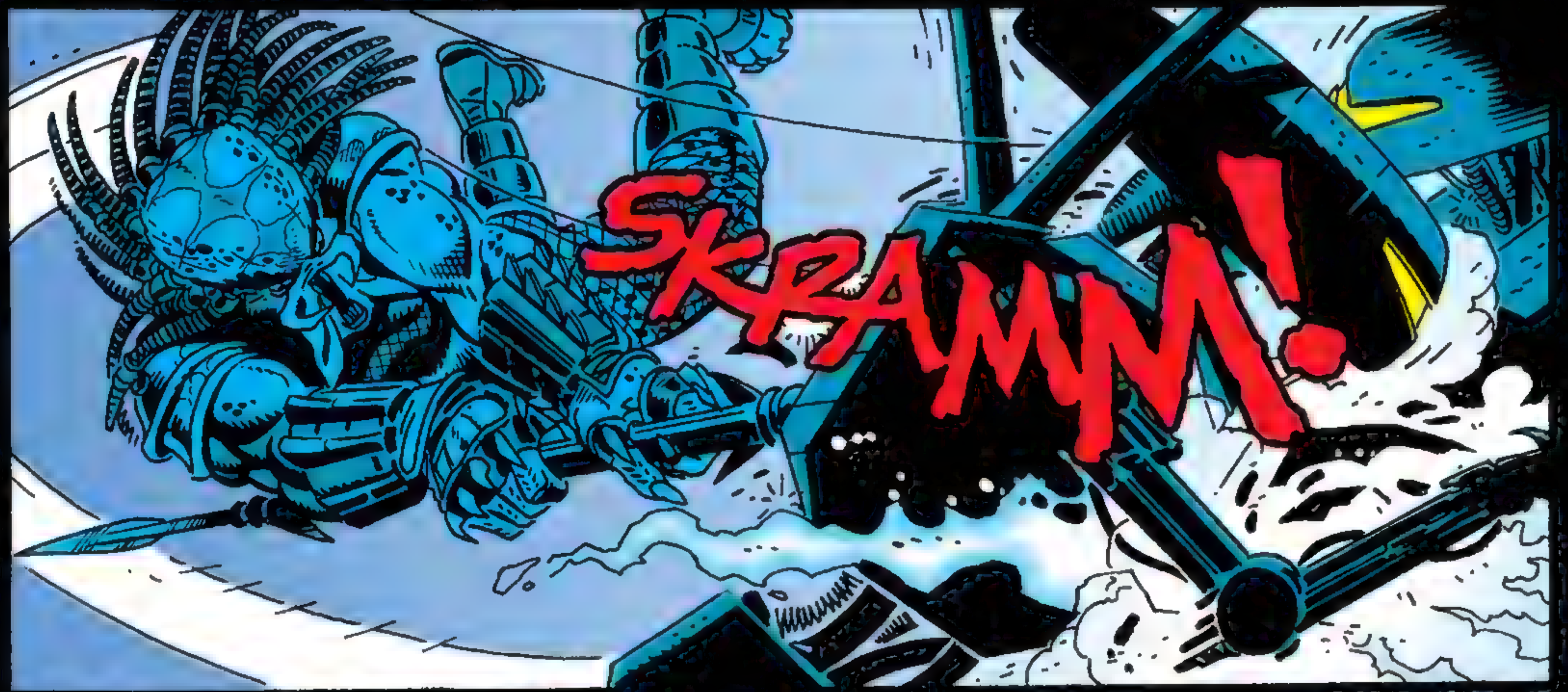
HE CAN TAKE
CARE OF HIMSELF!

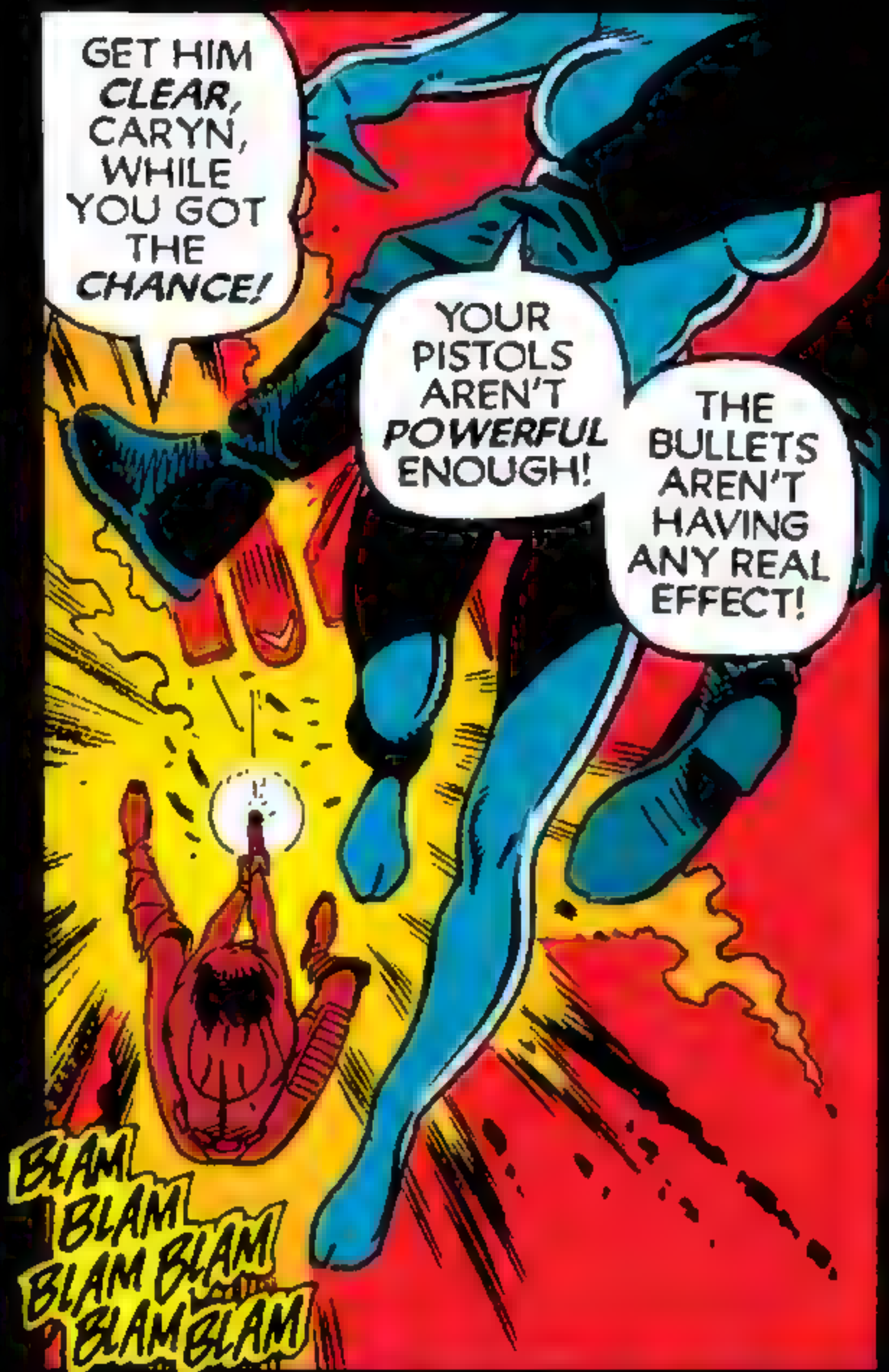
YOU
DO THE
SAME!



AFTER
THAT...

...THERE WAS
NO MORE
TIME FOR
TALKING.





GET HIM
CLEAR,
CARYN,
WHILE
YOU GOT
THE
CHANCE!

YOUR
PISTOLS
AREN'T
POWERFUL
ENOUGH!

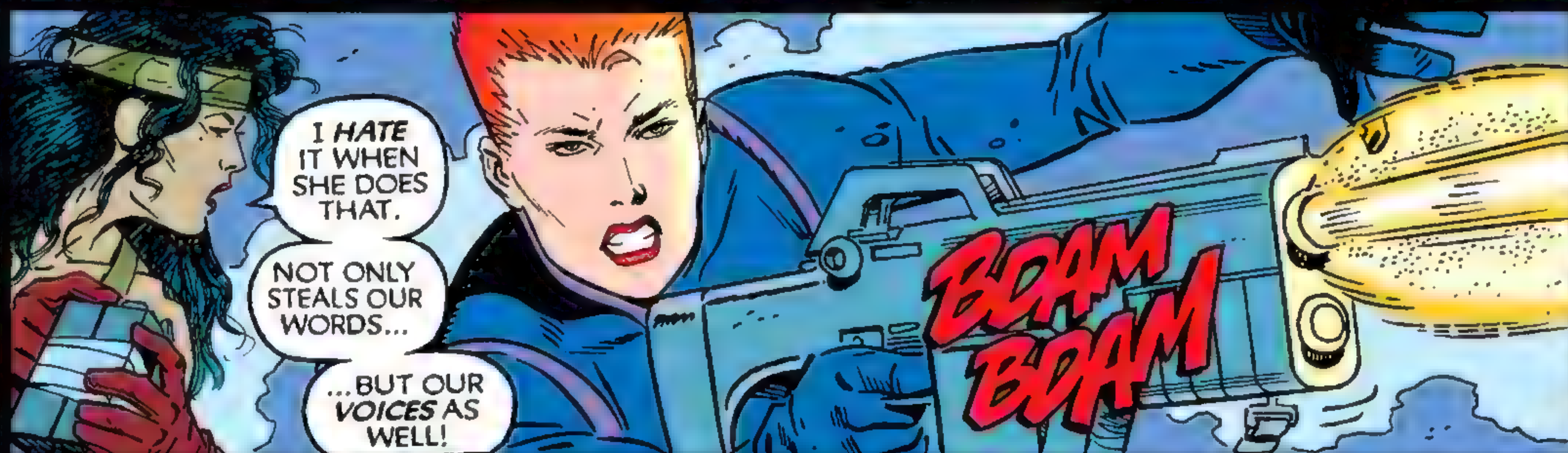
THE
BULLETS
AREN'T
HAVING
ANY REAL
EFFECT!

BLAM
BLAM
BLAM BLAM
BLAM BLAM



I THINK... THE
POINT... JUST BE-
CAME MOOT.

SHAKO

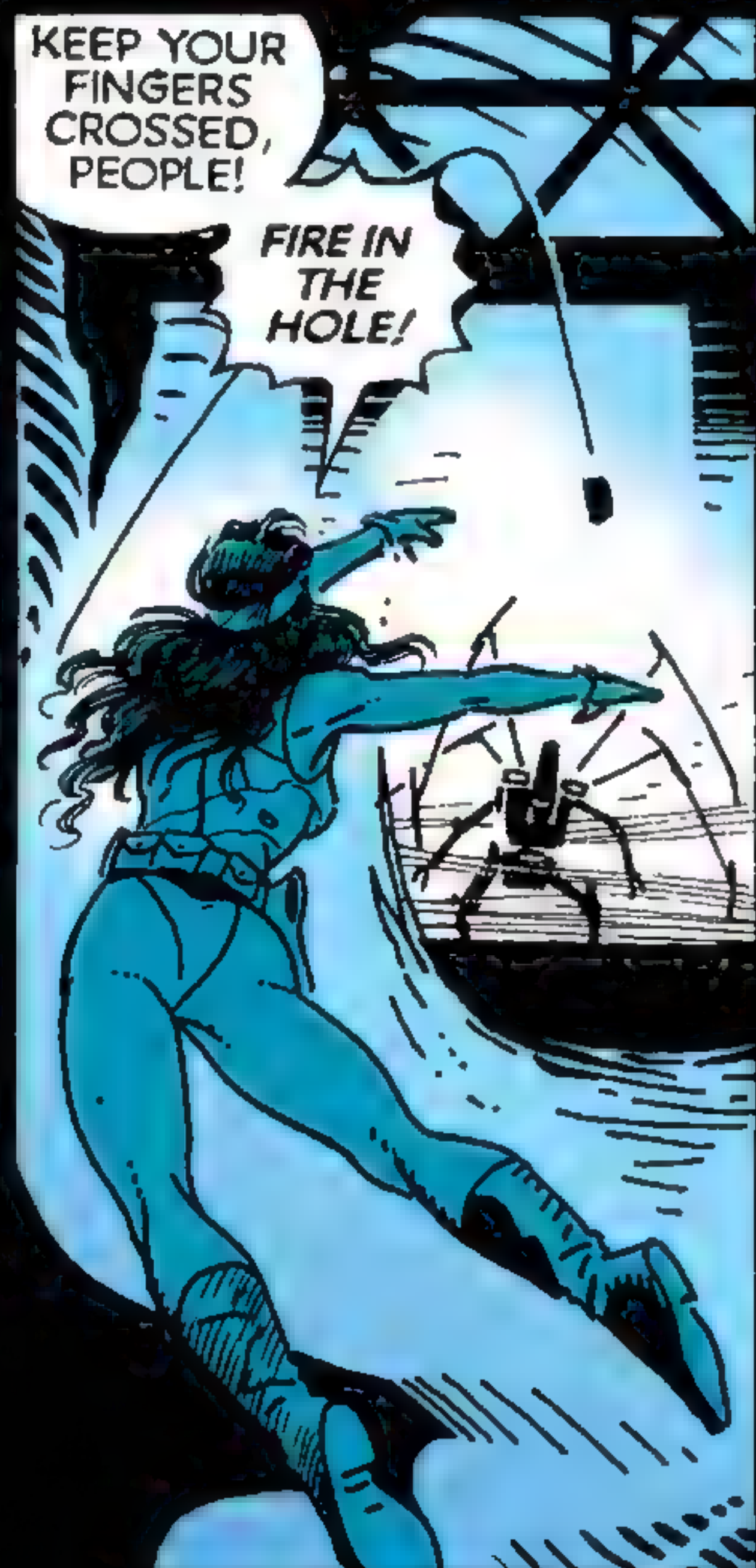


I HATE
IT WHEN
SHE DOES
THAT.

NOT ONLY
STEALS OUR
WORDS...

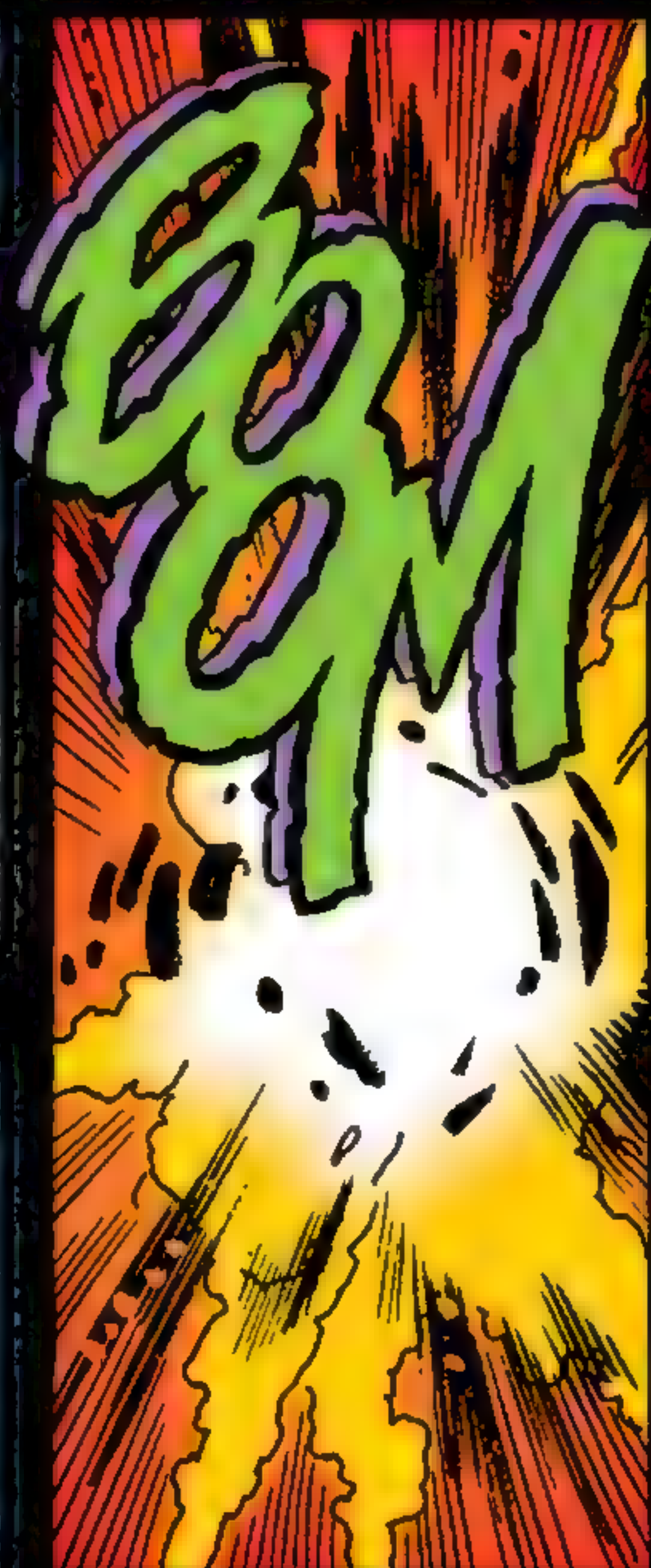
...BUT OUR
VOICES AS
WELL!

BOAM
BOAM

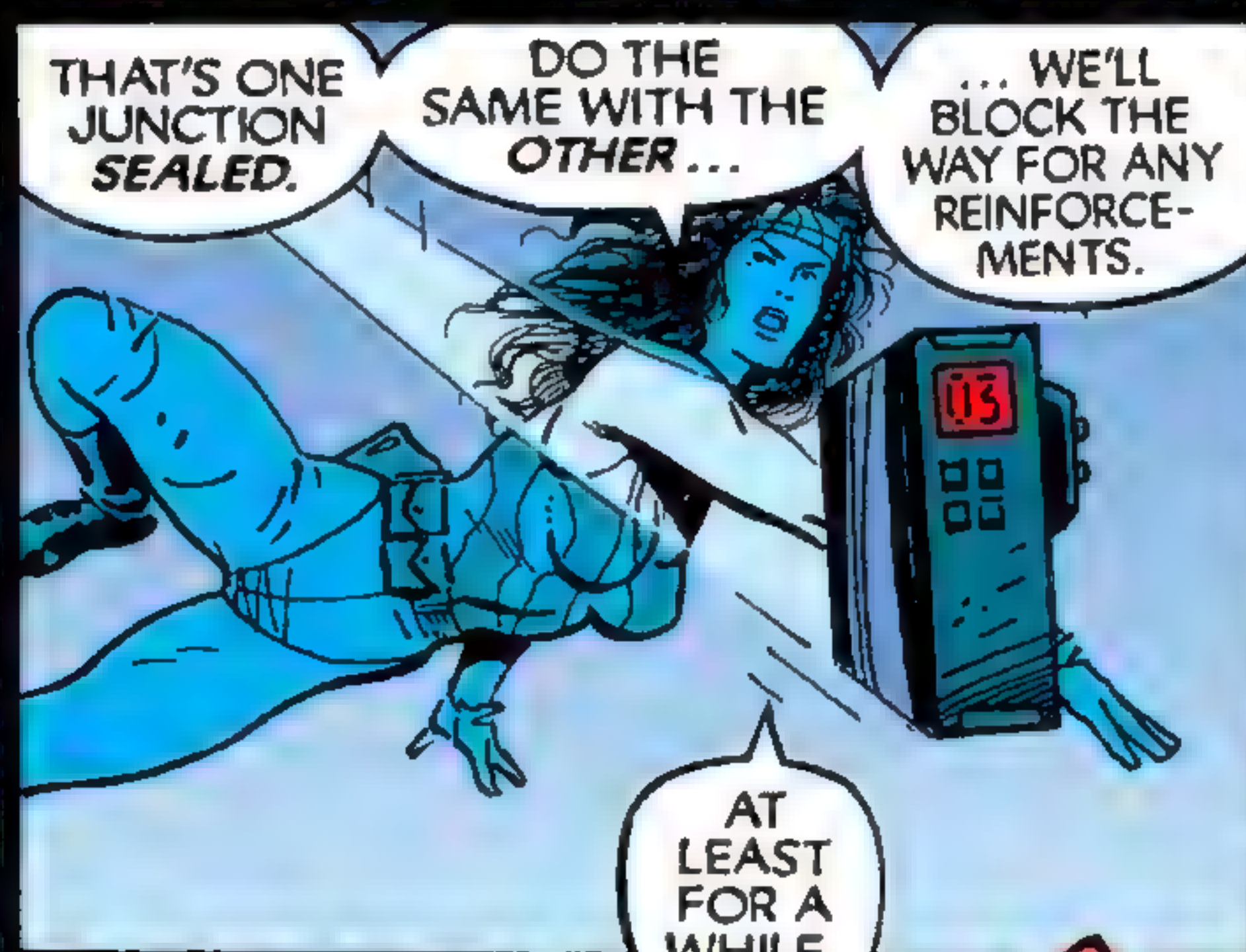


KEEP YOUR
FINGERS
CROSSED,
PEOPLE!

FIRE IN
THE
HOLE!



BOOM



THAT'S ONE
JUNCTION
SEALED.

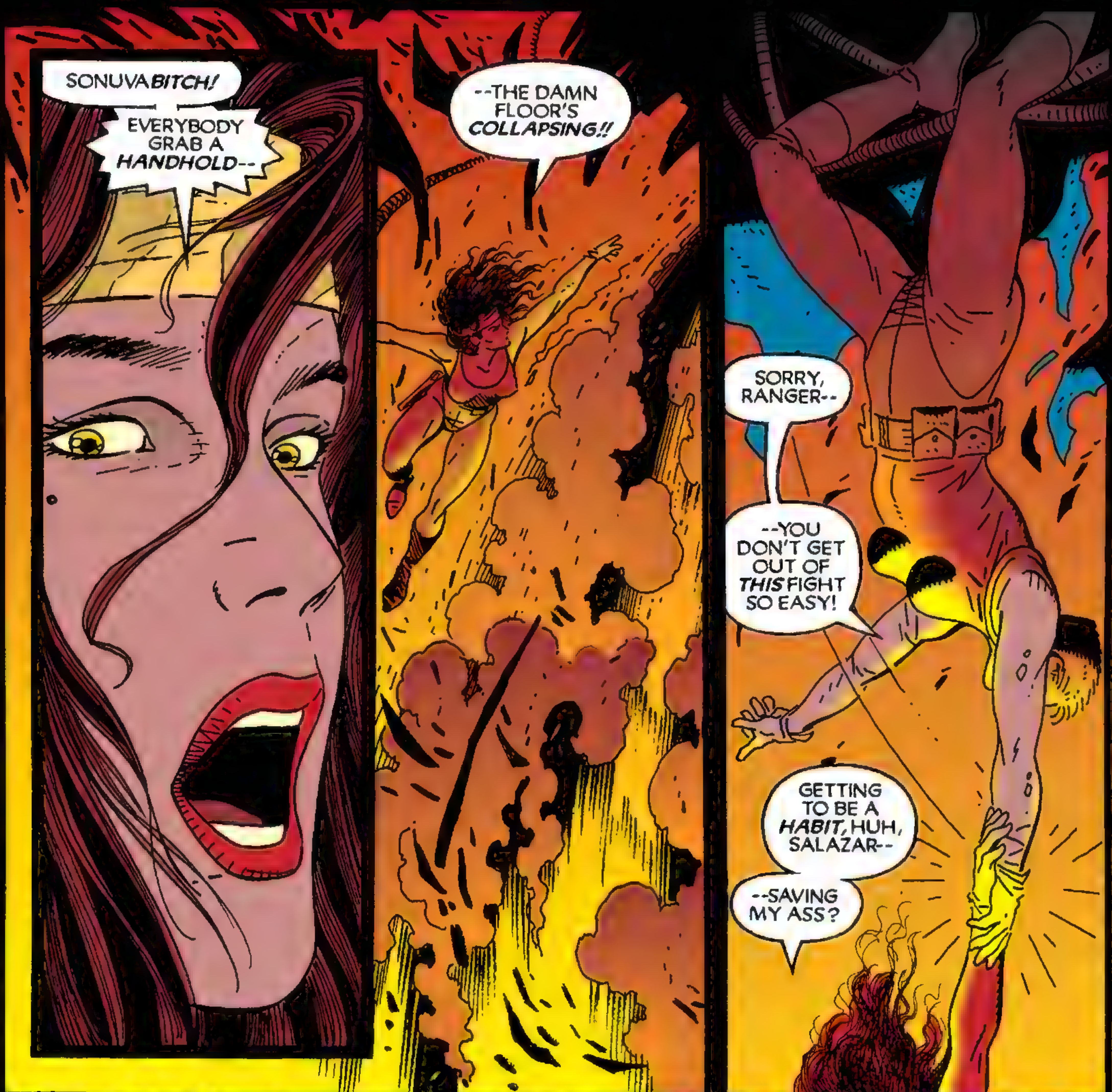
DO THE
SAME WITH THE
OTHER...

... WE'LL
BLOCK THE
WAY FOR ANY
REINFORCE-
MENTS.

AT
LEAST
FOR A
WHILE.



BOOM!



SONUVABITCH!

EVERYBODY
GRAB A
HANDHOLD--

--THE DAMN
FLOOR'S
COLLAPSING!!

SORRY,
RANGER--

--YOU
DON'T GET
OUT OF
THIS FIGHT
SO EASY!

GETTING
TO BE A
HABIT, HUH,
SALAZAR--

--SAVING
MY ASS?

I HAVEN'T SAVED
ANYTHING YET,
DeMEDICI!

MATER
CHRISTI--
SECONDARY
EXPLOSIONS
DOWN
BELOW--

--GISANDE,
THEY'VE
IGNITED A
FIREBALL!

I'M
BURNING!

ENOUGH
TO HURT,
MAYBE.

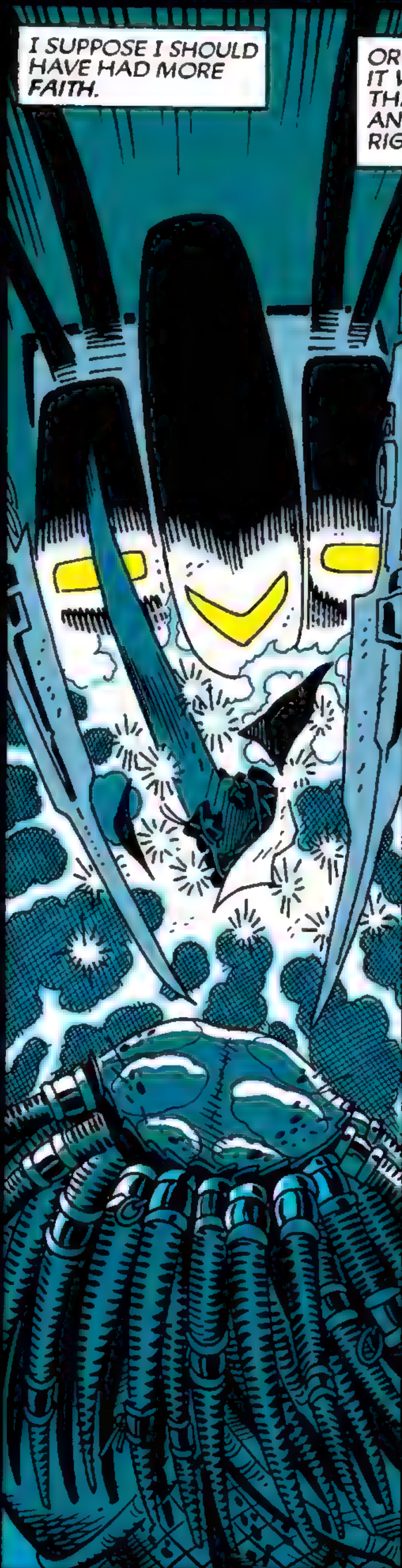
NOT ENOUGH
TO KILL!

BUT NOT
ENOUGH TO
MAIM.



IN THAT AWFUL
MOMENT, I
THOUGHT BIG
MAMA WAS
DEAD.

THERE WAS NO-
THING ANY OF
US COULD DO
TO SAVE HER.

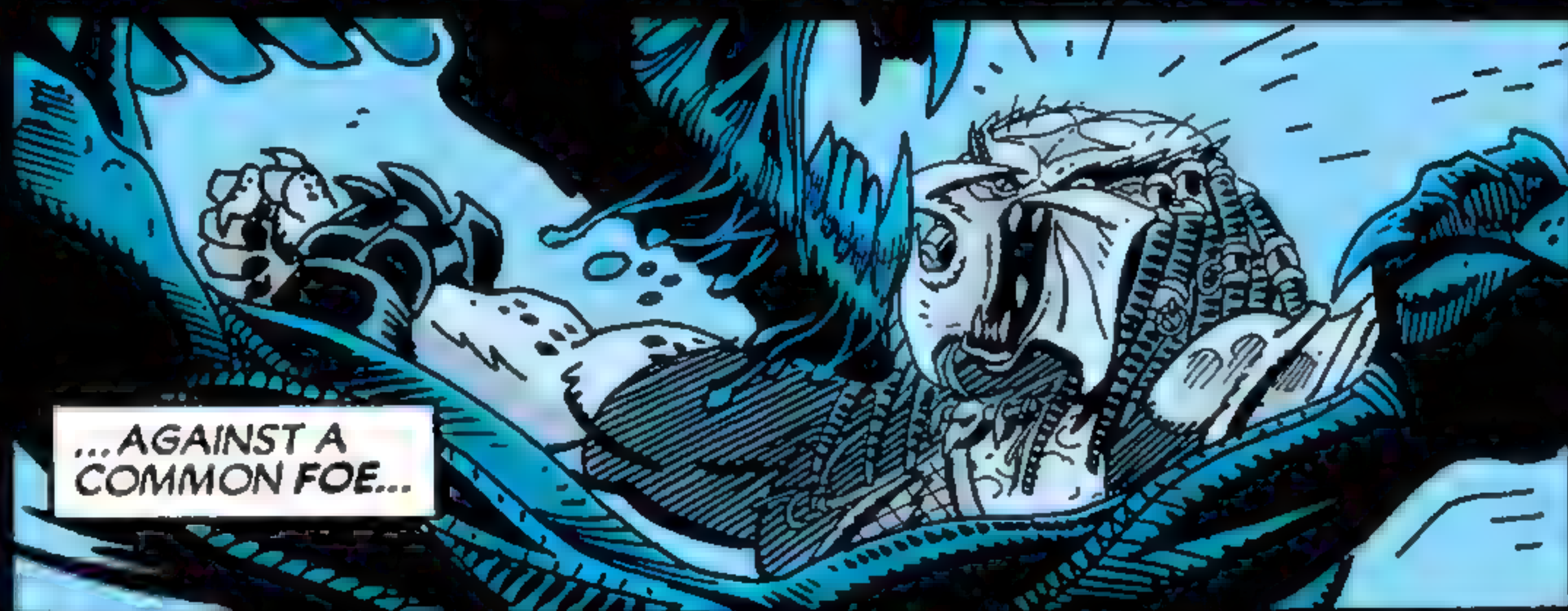


I SUPPOSE I SHOULD
HAVE HAD MORE
FAITH.

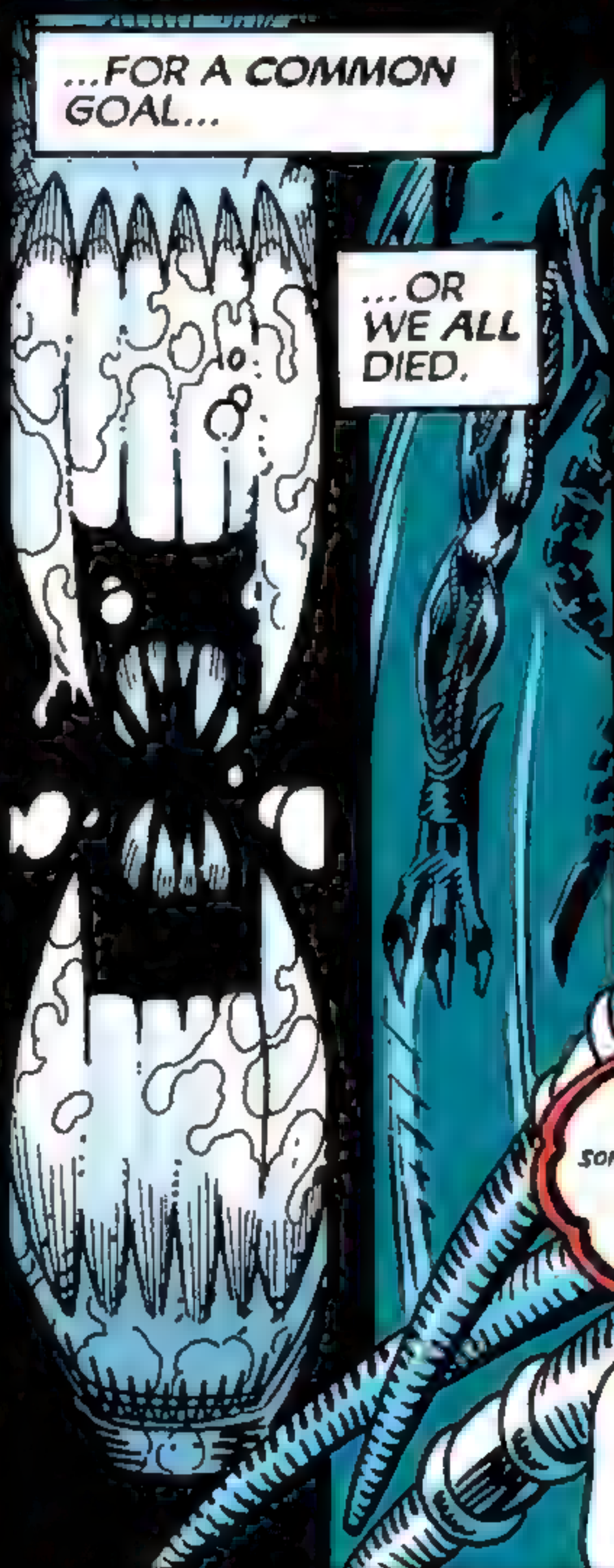
OR PERHAPS
IT WAS SIMPLY
THAT MARIA'S
ANALYSIS WAS
RIGHT.



WE ALL FOUGHT
TOGETHER...

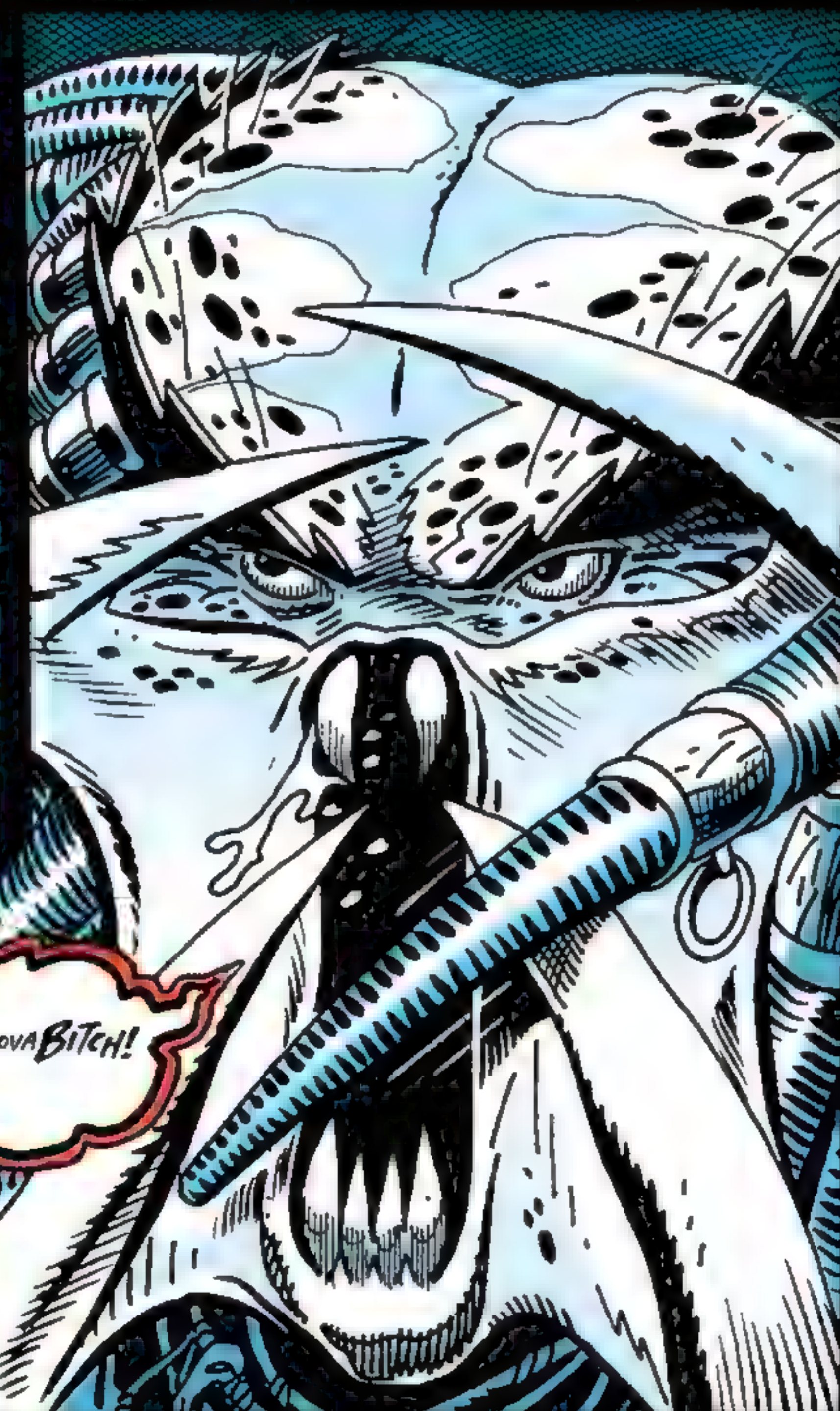


...AGAINST A
COMMON FOE...



...FOR A COMMON
GOAL...

...OR
WE ALL
DIED.



SONOVA BITCH!

I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW BIG MAMA FELT.

HER KIND HATE THE ALIENS EVEN MORE THAN WE DO (BUT HOW THE HELL DO I KNOW THAT?)

(MORE MYSTERY KNOWLEDGE, I SUPPOSE, FROM MY MYSTERY INNER SELF.)

IT MUST BE HELL OWING HER LIFE TO THE MOTHER QUEEN, AND TWICE OVER IN THE BARGAIN.

I'VE FOUND AN AIRLOCK.

THAT'S THE GOOD NEWS.

THE REST STINKS.

THIS IS THE ONLY 'LOCK WE CAN REACH.

AS YOU CAN SEE, THE POWER'S OUT. TOTALLY CRASHED.

MANUAL CONTROLS ARE JAMMED AS WELL. WHICH MEANS WE'LL HAVE TO FIRE THE EXPLOSIVE BOLTS TO FREE THE OUTER DOOR.

THAT'LL AUTOMATICALLY SEAL THE INNER DOOR.

AND WE HAVE NO PRESSURE SUITS.

WHICH MEANS NO PROTECTION FROM THE VACUUM OUTSIDE.

WE WON'T BE ABLE TO OPEN IT AGAIN.

WE'LL LAST FOR AS LONG AS WE CAN HOLD OUR BREATHS.

SOMEONE HAS TO PLAY PATHFINDER.

GET TO BIG MAMA'S SHIP, AND ESTABLISH A TRANSIT LINK WITH THE STATION.

YOU, TROPHY?

ME, SALAZAR.

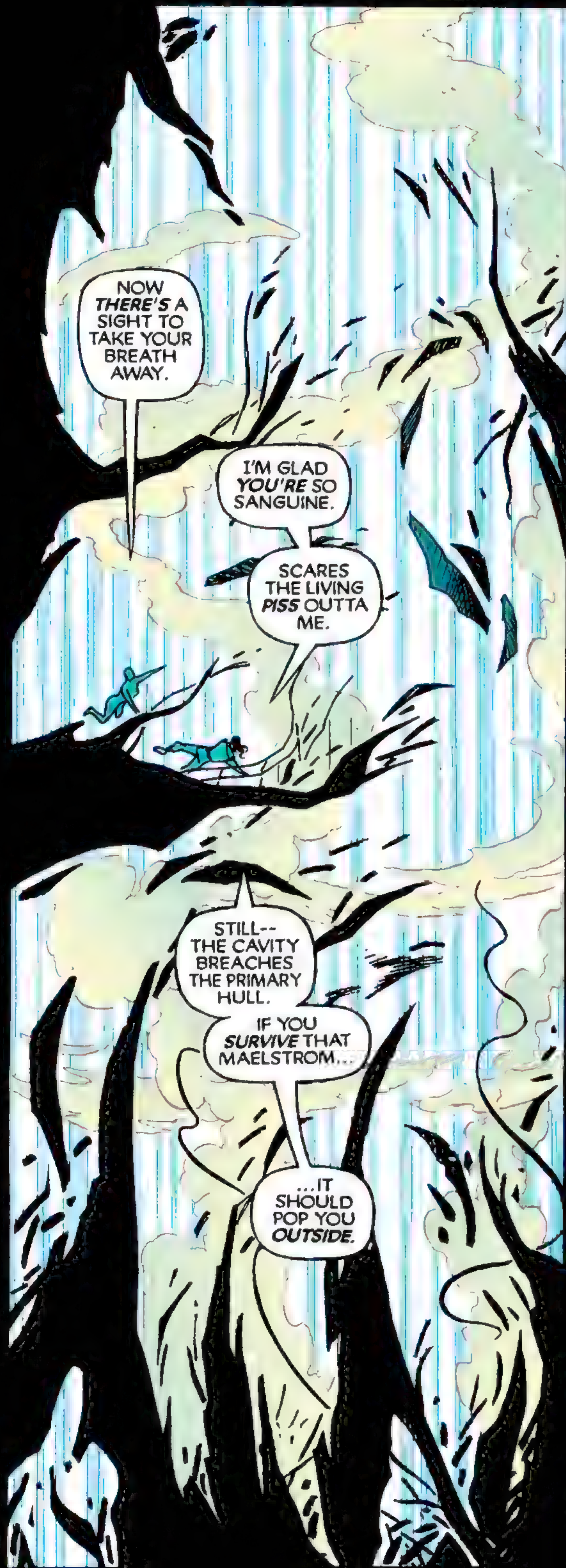
I KNOW THE SHIP.

AND OF US ALL, I'M THE LEAST INJURED.

YOU BLOW THE LOCK TO GET OUT, CARYN, WE END UP TRAPPED.

I THINK I CAN HELP THERE, TOMMY.

I MAY HAVE ANOTHER WAY OUT.



NOW
THERE'S A
SIGHT TO
TAKE YOUR
BREATH
AWAY.

I'M GLAD
YOU'RE SO
SANGUINE.

SCARES
THE LIVING
PISS OUTTA
ME.

STILL--
THE CAVITY
BREACHES
THE PRIMARY
HULL.

IF YOU
SURVIVE THAT
MAELSTROM...

...IT
SHOULD
POP YOU
OUTSIDE.

THEN,
WHAT?

I'VE BEEN
SCROUNGING
THE LOCAL
EQUIPMENT
LOCKERS.

CAME UP WITH
A GRAPPLING GUN
AND TETHER, AND
A PORTABLE
THRUSTER PACK.

THE OTHERS GIVE
FREELY OF WHAT
LITTLE THEY
HAVE LEFT.

NO ONE--
NOT EVEN
GISANDE--
ASKS THE
OBVIOUS
QUESTION:

...NAMELY,
HOW IS IT
THAT I KNOW
WHAT TO DO?

I SUPPOSE THAT'S
FOR WORRYING
ABOUT AFTER.

I FEEL A TWINGE
DEEP BENEATH
MY BREAST-
BONE-- IS IT MY
FEAR OR THE
EMBRYO'S?

ABSURDLY, I PUT ON
MY BEST FACE FOR
BIG MAMA.

I REFUSE TO LET HER
SEE MY FEAR.

THERE'S A TERRIBLE
RAGE IN HER EYES.

IT'S OUR BATTLE,
BUT HER SHIP. SHE
BELIEVES SHE
SHOULD BE THE ONE
TO GO. SHE CAN'T
ABIDE BEING TOO
WEAK AND BADLY
HURT TO MAKE
THE ATTEMPT.

IF I HAD MY
DRUTHERS, I'D
CHANGE PLACES
WITH HER IN AN
INSTANT.

WHAT THE
HELL IS A
"DRUTHER"?!?

SHOT THE
ROGUE RIVER
RAPIDS WHEN
I WAS YOUNG
AND FOOLISH.

HOW CAN
THAT BE?
THE ROGUE
RIVER HASN'T
EXISTED FOR
A CENTURY!

TO CELEBRATE MY
ACCEPTANCE TO
THE ACADEMY.

A LETTER
I NEVER
RECEIVED,
TO A PLACE
I'VE NEVER
BEEN!

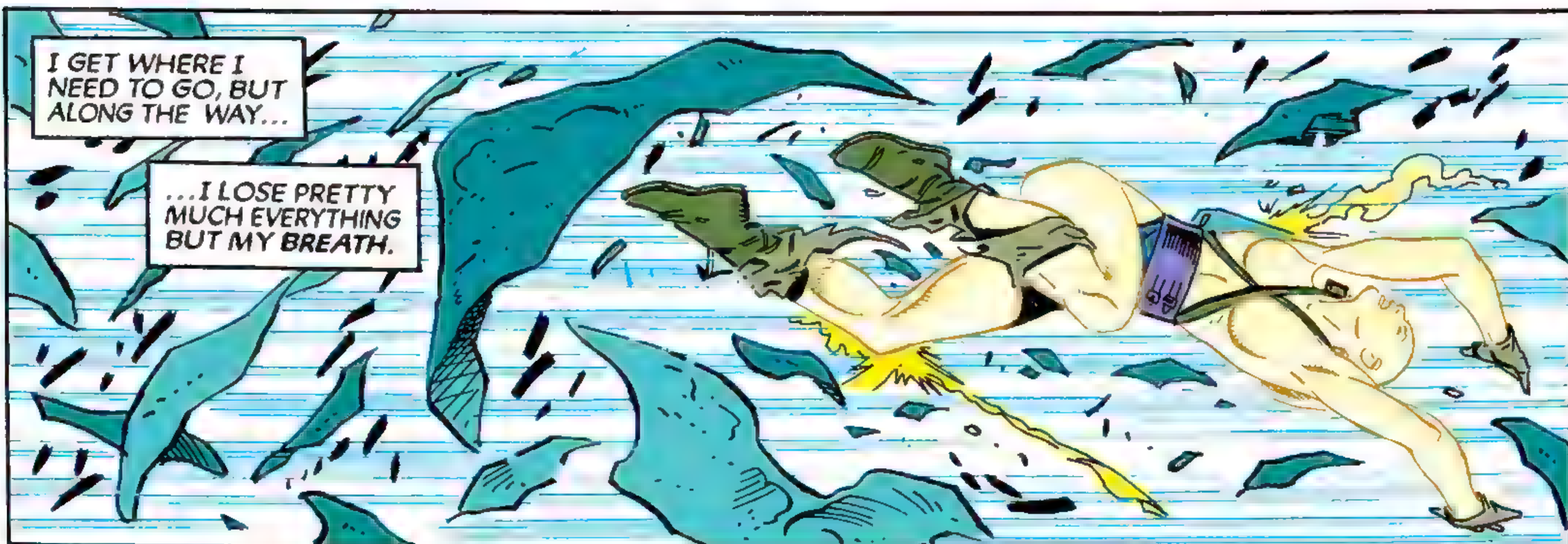
DAMN NEAR
DROWNED.

LOVED
EVERY
MOMENT.

THOSE
MOMENTS
ARE LIES!

GET OUT
OF THE
PAST, LOCK
INTO THE
PRESENT!

OR
I AM.

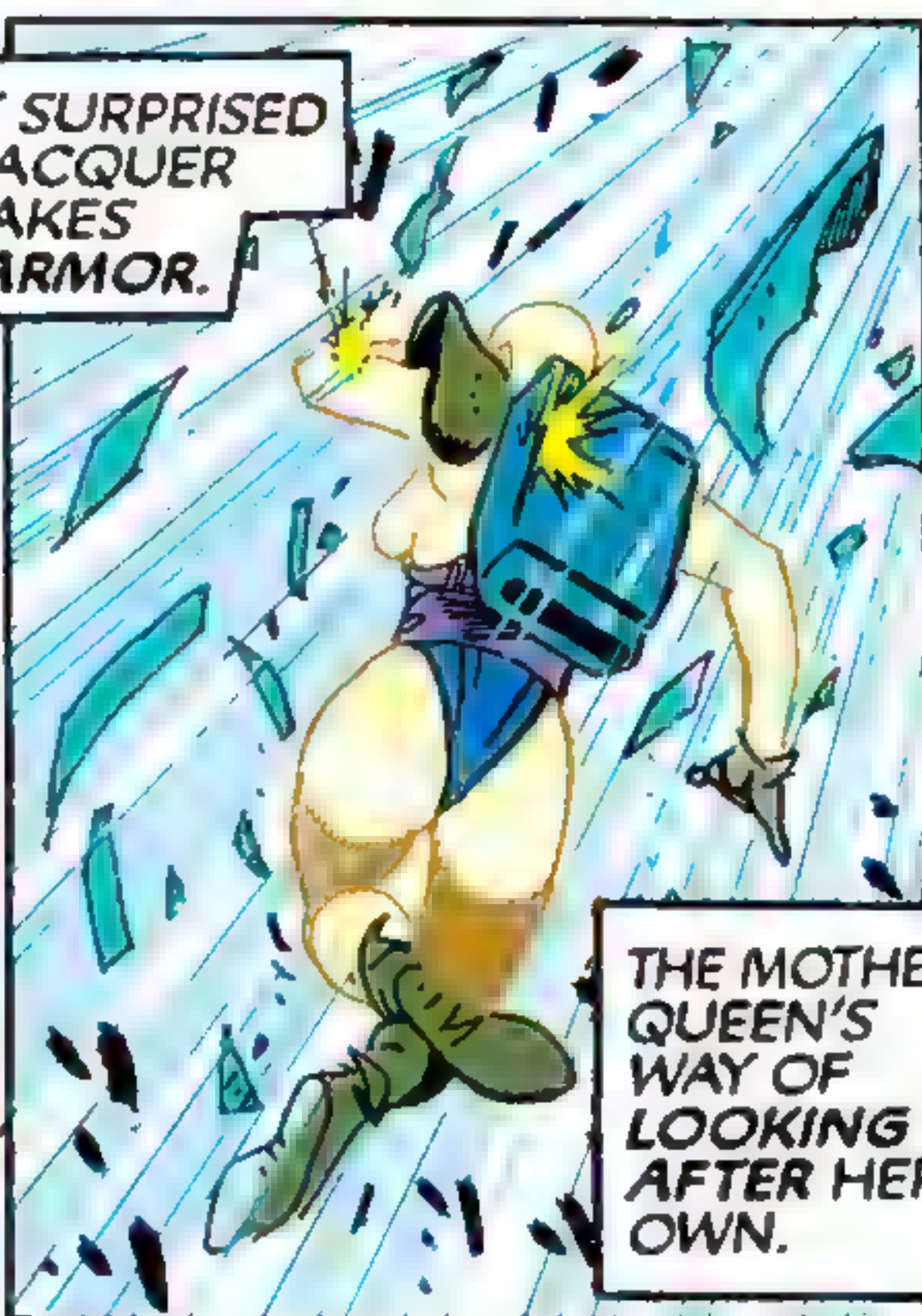


I GET WHERE I
NEED TO GO, BUT
ALONG THE WAY...

...I LOSE PRETTY
MUCH EVERYTHING
BUT MY BREATH.



NOT TERRIBLY SURPRISED
TO FIND MY LACQUER
CARAPACE MAKES
PRETTY FAIR ARMOR.

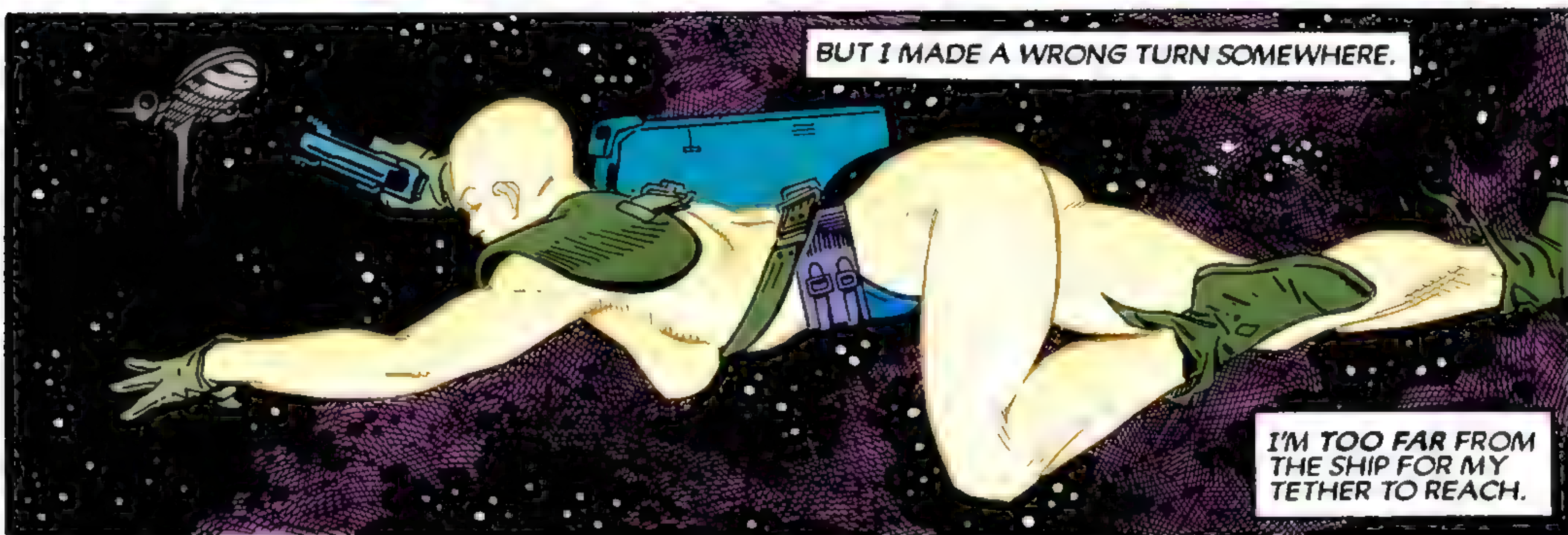


THE MOTHER
QUEEN'S
WAY OF
LOOKING
AFTER HER
OWN.



LUCKY
ME.

THE THRUSTER
SHUNTS ME
FREE OF THE
OUTWASH.



BUT I MADE A WRONG TURN SOMEWHERE.

I'M TOO FAR FROM
THE SHIP FOR MY
TETHER TO REACH.



NO PROBLEM. I'LL
SIMPLY USE THE
THRUSTER--

-- WHAT'S
THAT FLASHING
LIGHT ON THE
COMMAND
PANEL?!



SYSTEMS
OVERLOAD!?!

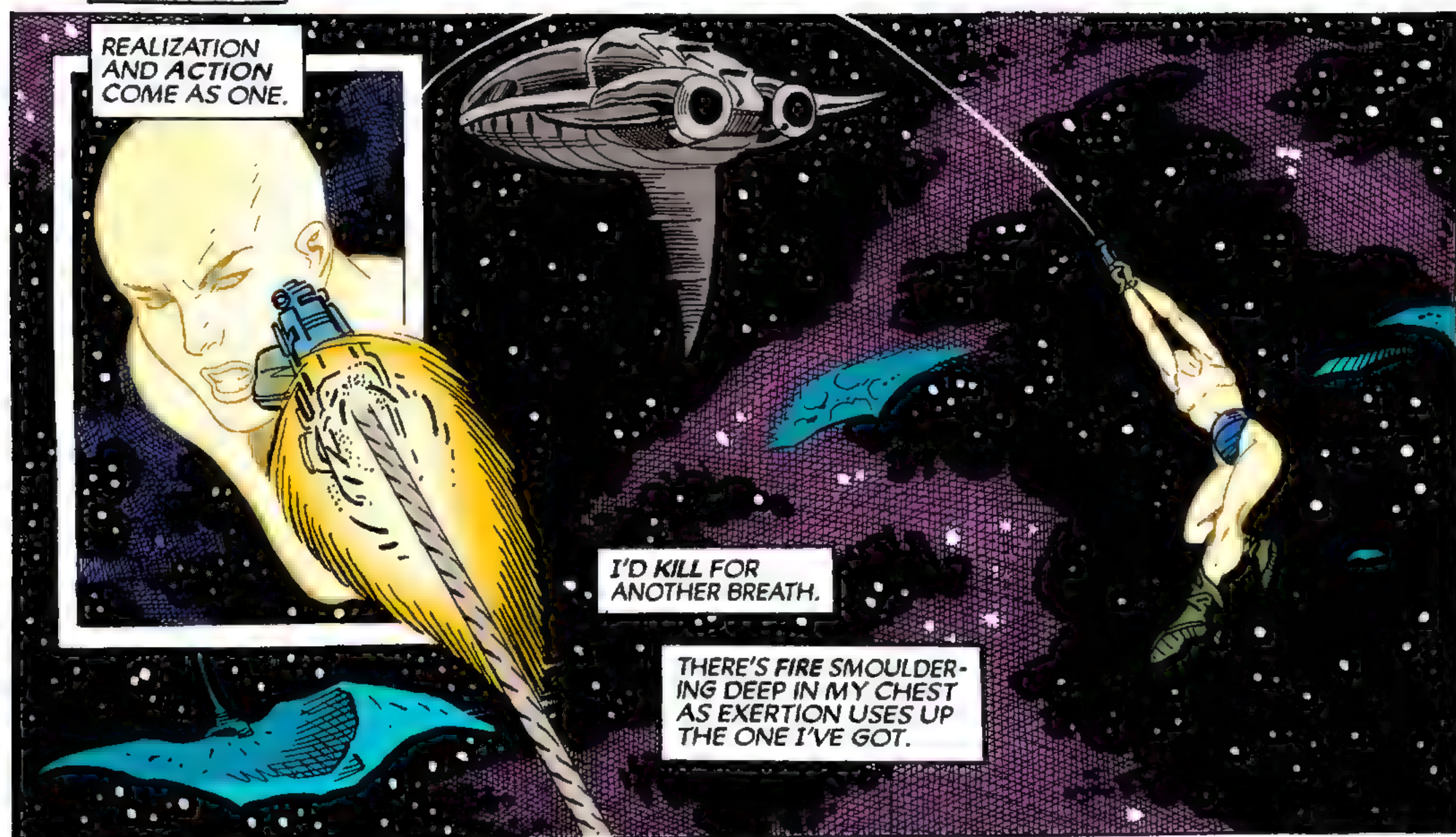




THE BLAST DOESN'T
DO ME ANY DAMAGE,
THAT I NOTICE.

IT ONLY SENDS ME
TUMBLING THE
HELL AWAY IN THE
WRONG DIRECTION.

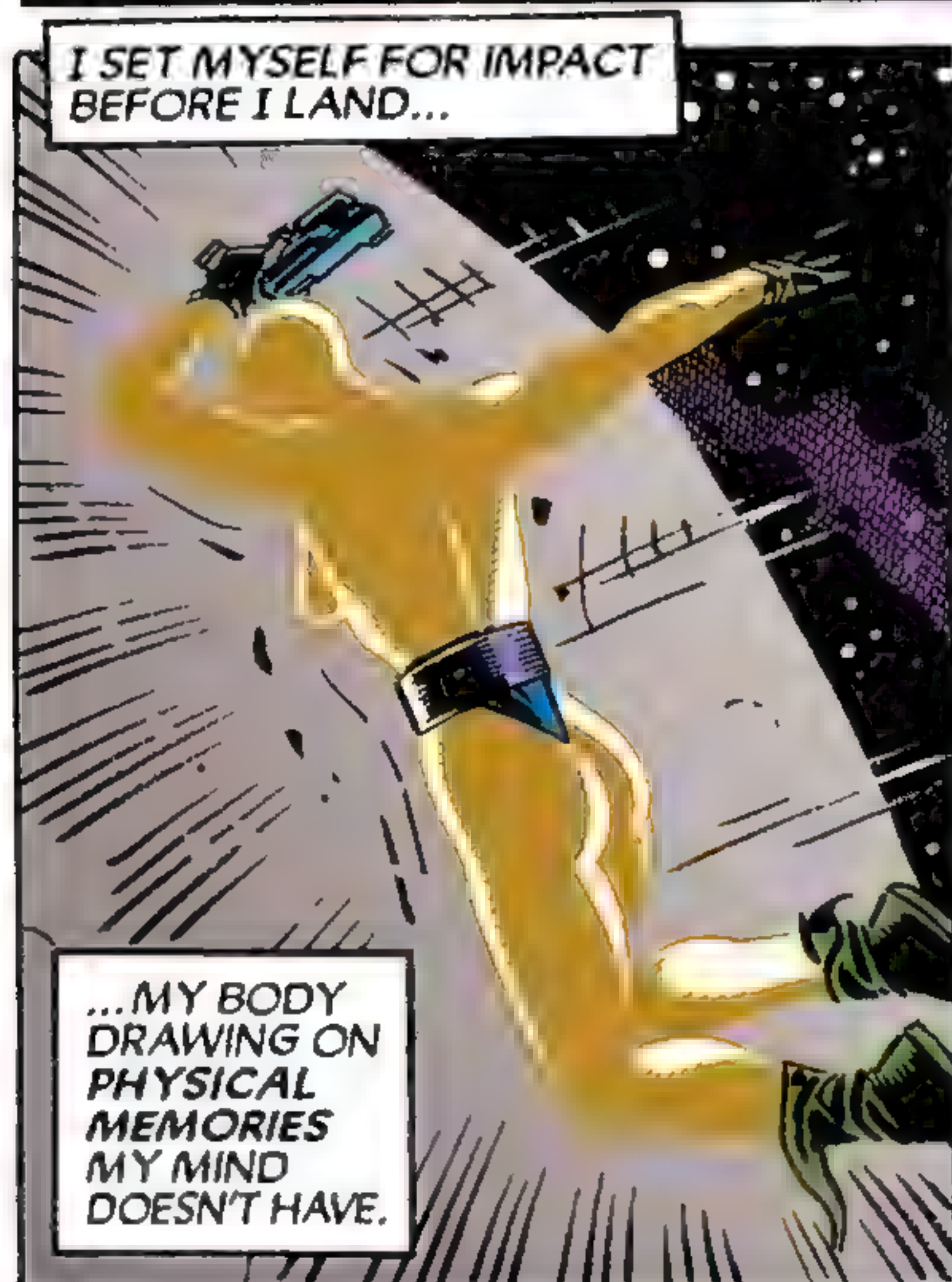
NO TIME FOR
CONSCIOUS
THOUGHT.



REALIZATION
AND ACTION
COME AS ONE.

I'D KILL FOR
ANOTHER BREATH.

THERE'S FIRE SMOULDER-
ING DEEP IN MY CHEST
AS EXERTION USES UP
THE ONE I'VE GOT.



I SET MYSELF FOR IMPACT
BEFORE I LAND...

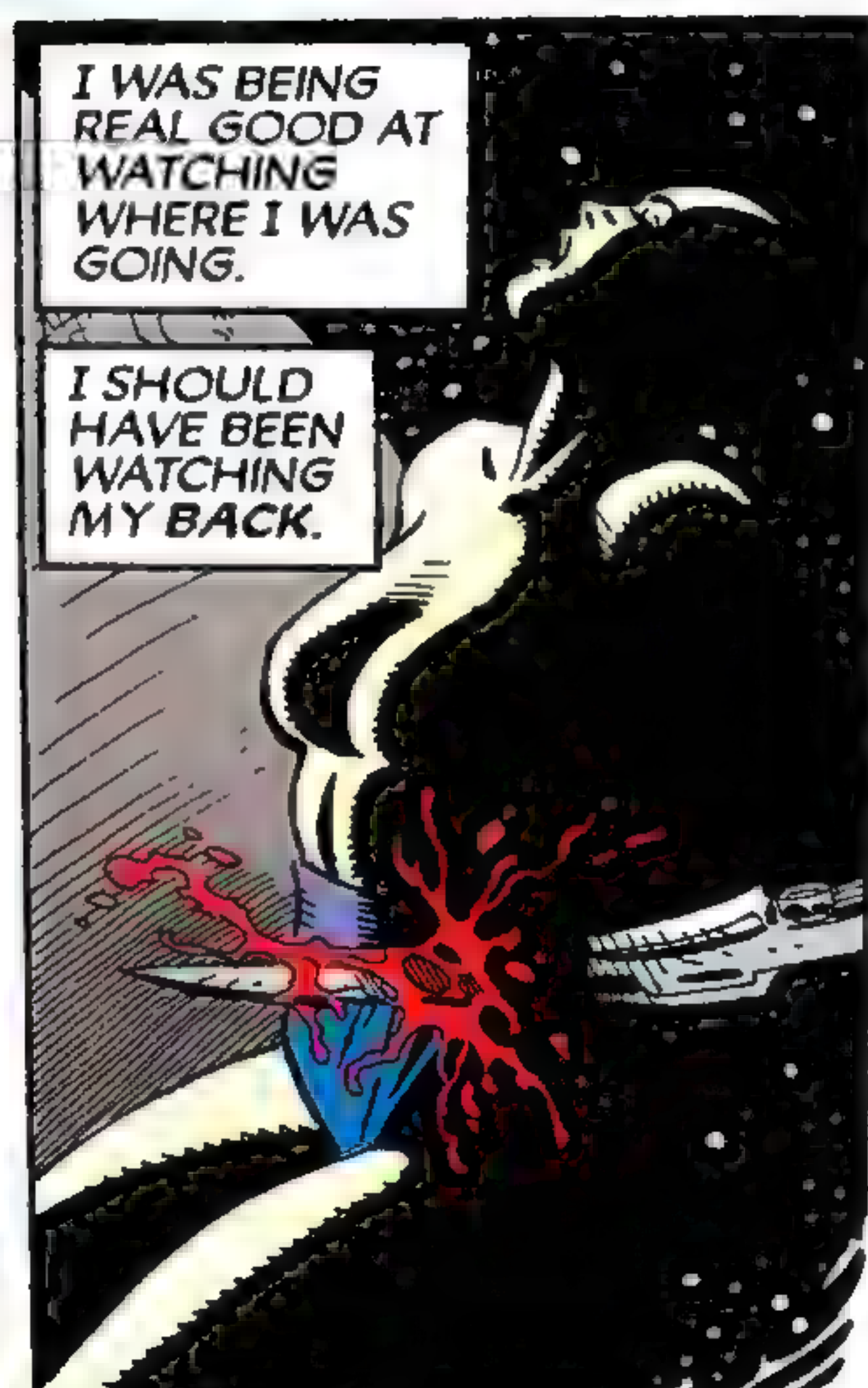
...MY BODY
DRAWING ON
PHYSICAL
MEMORIES
MY MIND
DOESN'T HAVE.



SOMEBODY
BLEW THE
FORWARD
AIRLOCK.

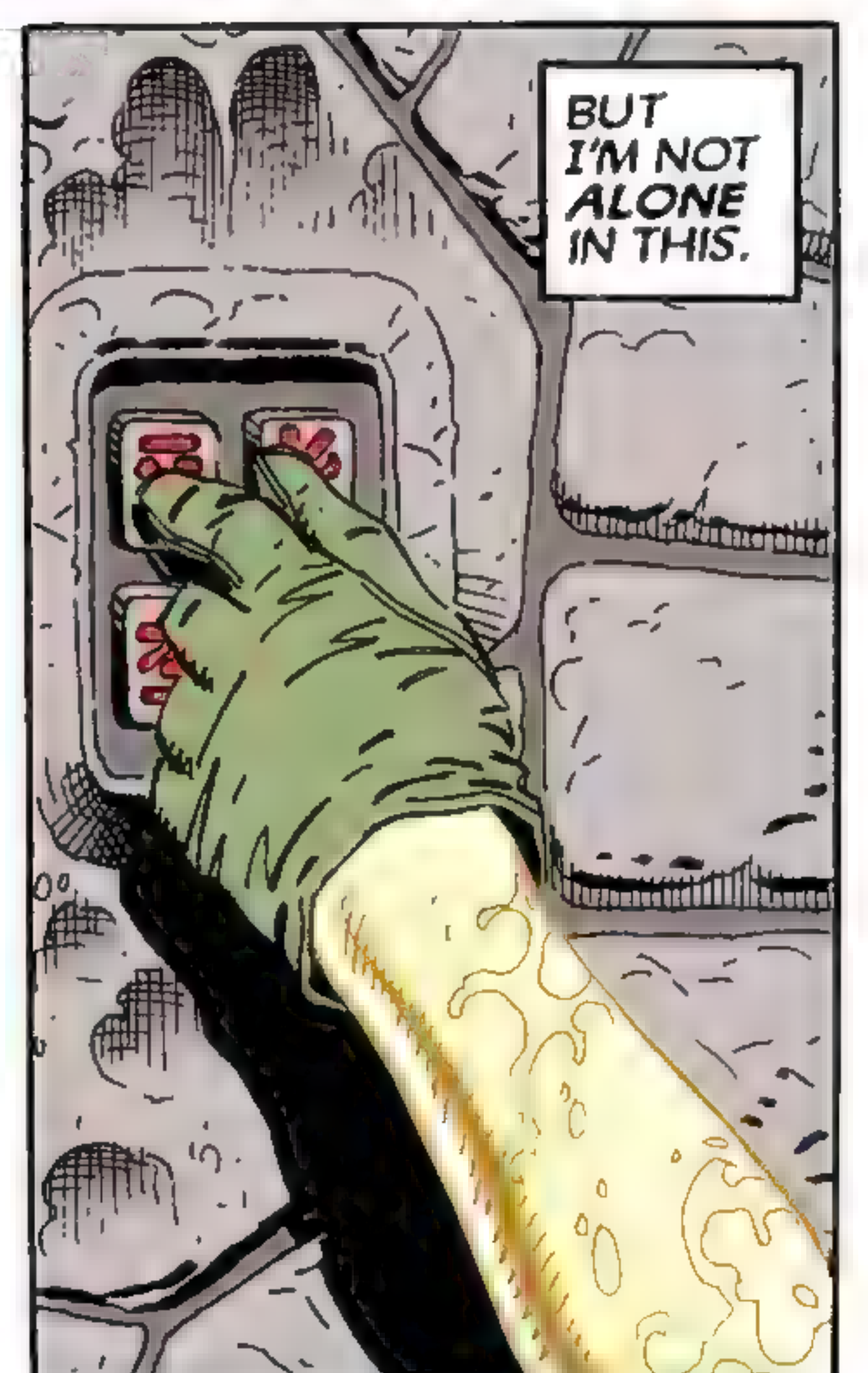
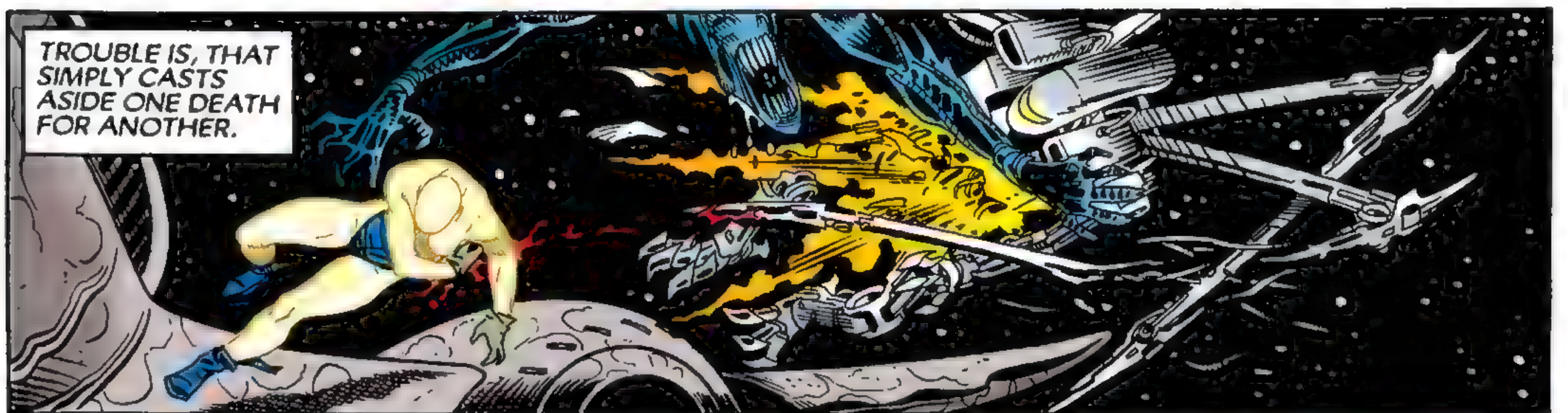
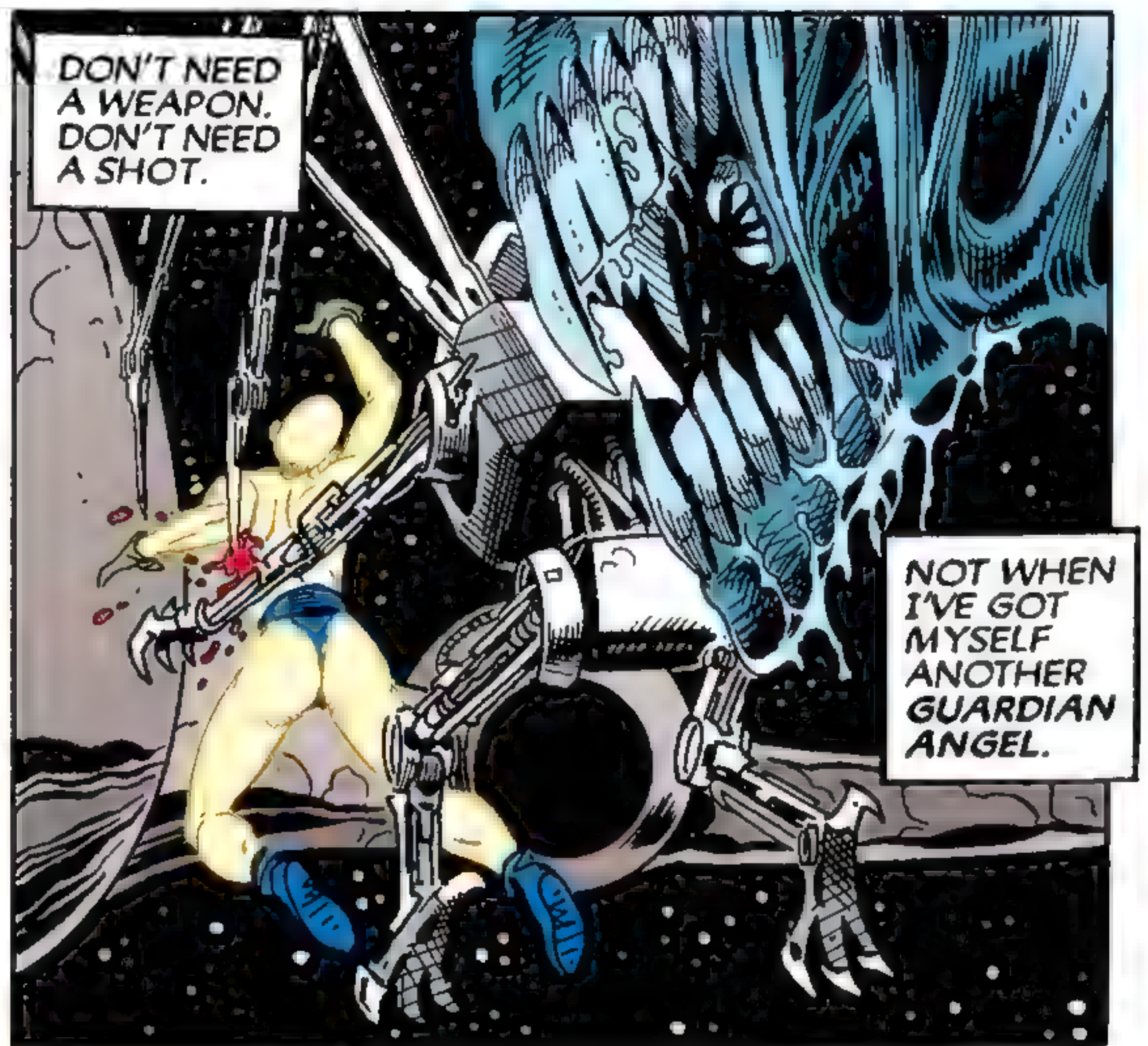
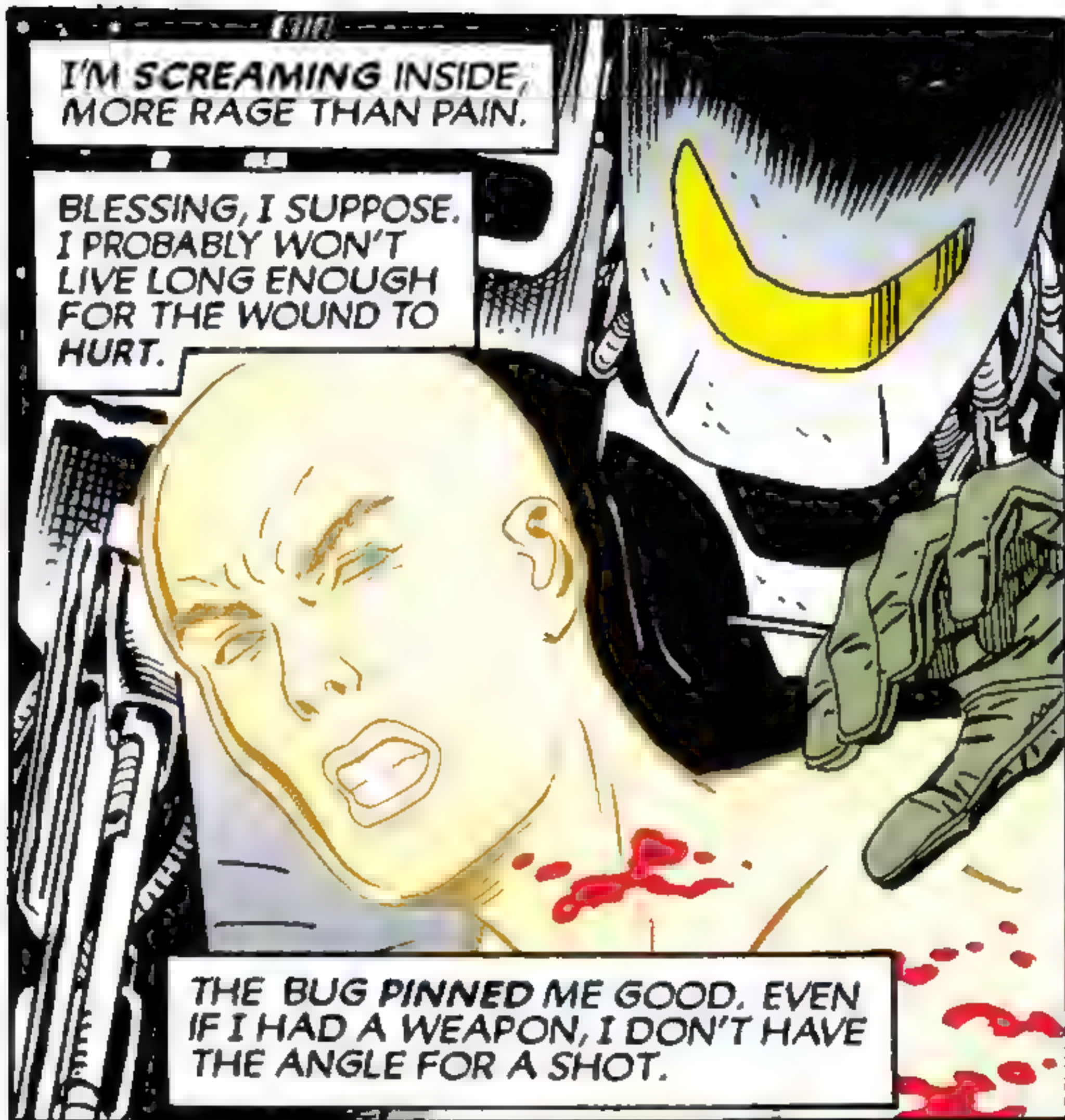
NO INGRESS
THAT WAY.

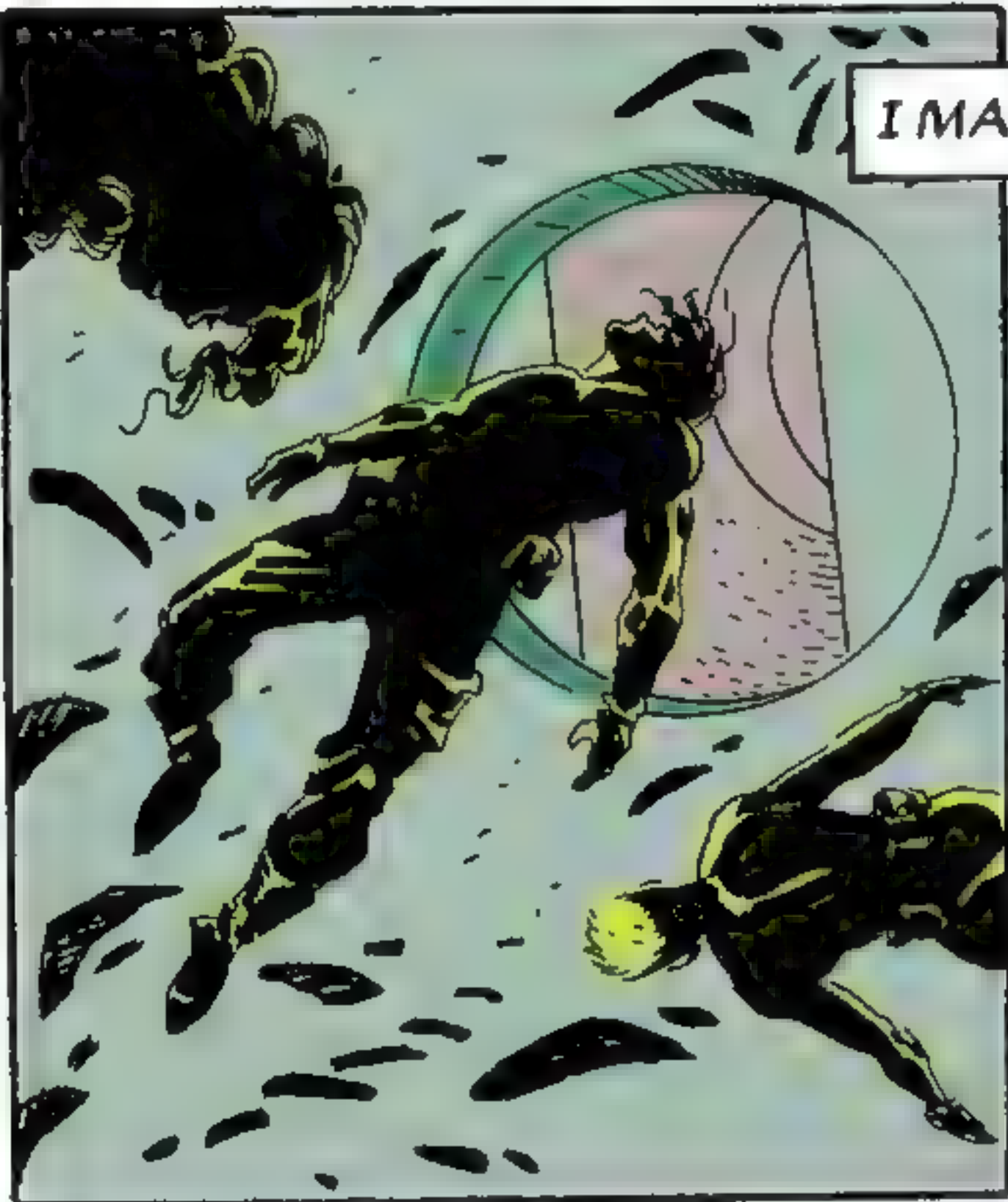
BUT THERE'S
ANOTHER
AFT.



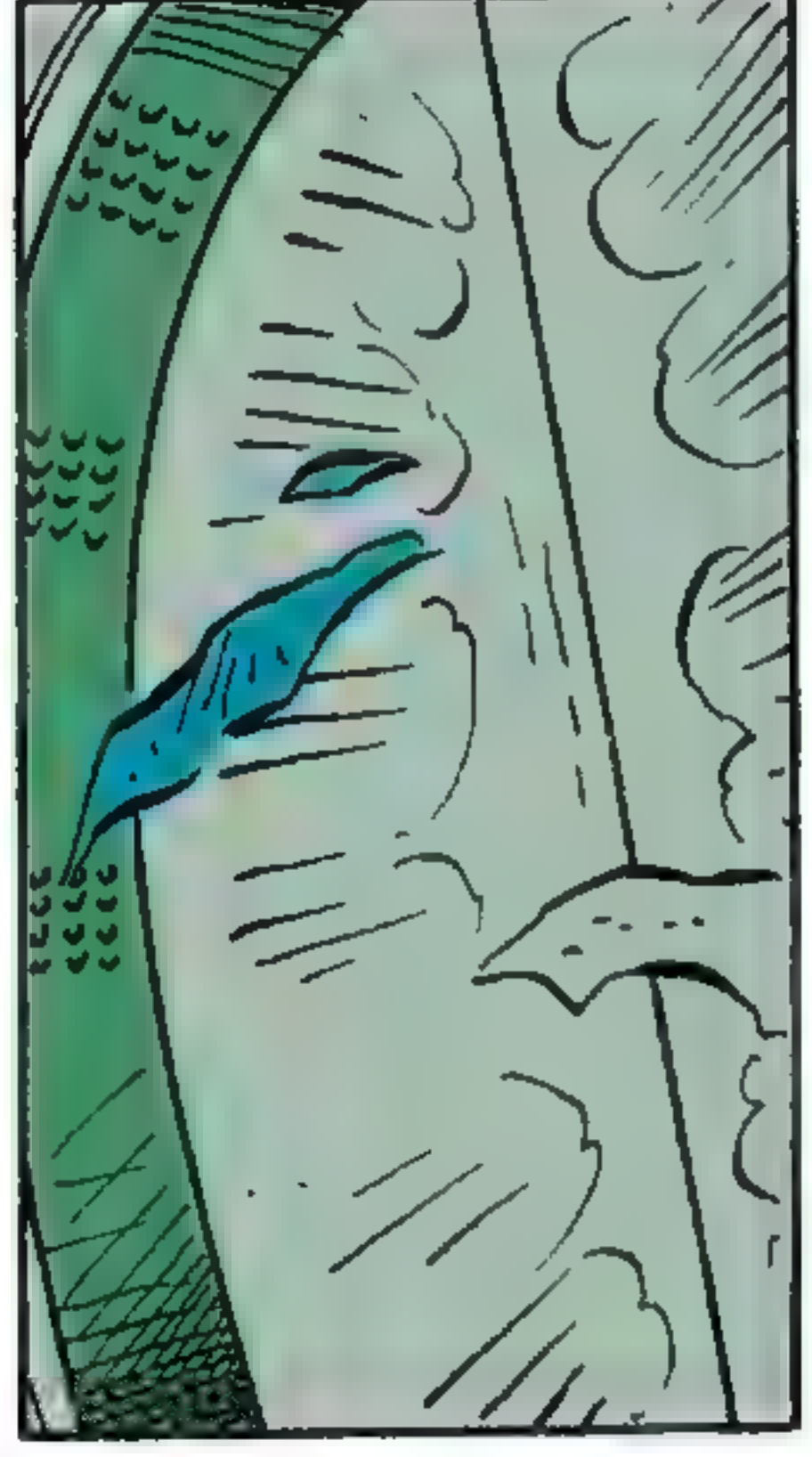
I WAS BEING
REAL GOOD AT
WATCHING
WHERE I WAS
GOING.

I SHOULD
HAVE BEEN
WATCHING
MY BACK.





I MAY FAIL MYSELF.



I WON'T
BETRAY MY
FRIENDS.



IN ALL OF HUMAN HISTORY,
THERE IS NO CREATURE
MORE DEADLY, MORE
HATED, MORE FEARED...

... THAN AN
ALIEN QUEEN.

SHE IS NIGHTMARE
INCARNATE, THE
DEVIL MADE FLESH.

MADE ALL THE
MORE TERRIBLE
BECAUSE, IF
THERE IS AN
INTELLIGENCE
LURKING WITHIN
THAT GLEAMING
MIDNIGHT
CARAPACE...

... IT IS OF AN
ORDER AND FORM
AND MAGNITUDE
THAT WE CAN
NEVER COMPRE-
HEND.

YET I FEEL I KNOW HER...

... AS I DO MYSELF.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT

ASIDE PROBABLY FROM HUMANITY, THERE IS NO MORE TERRITORIAL CREATURE.

WHAT SHE SURVEYS, SHE RULES.

WHERE SHE WALKS, NO OTHER FORMS SURVIVE.

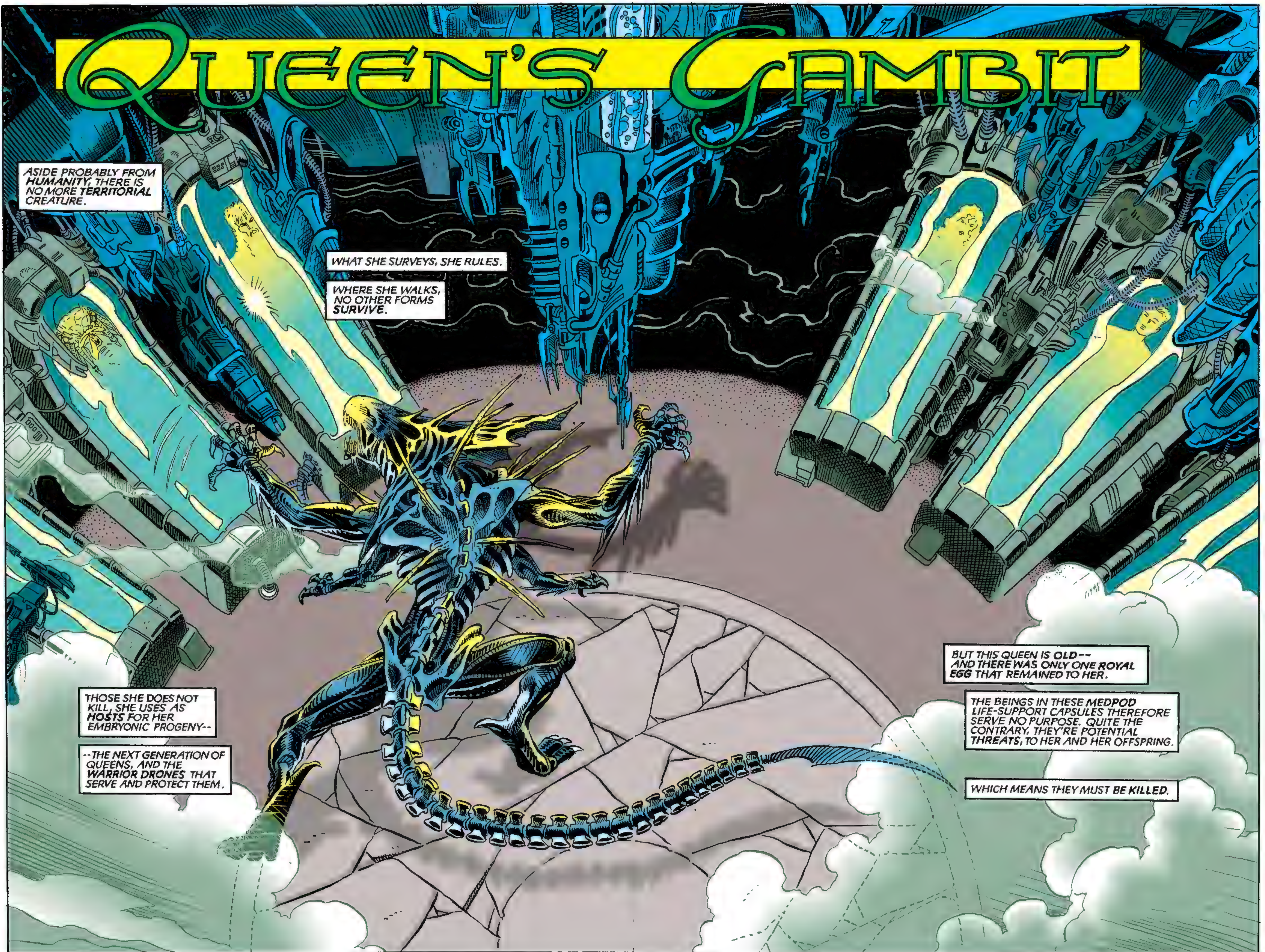
THOSE SHE DOES NOT KILL, SHE USES AS HOSTS FOR HER EMBRYONIC PROGENY--

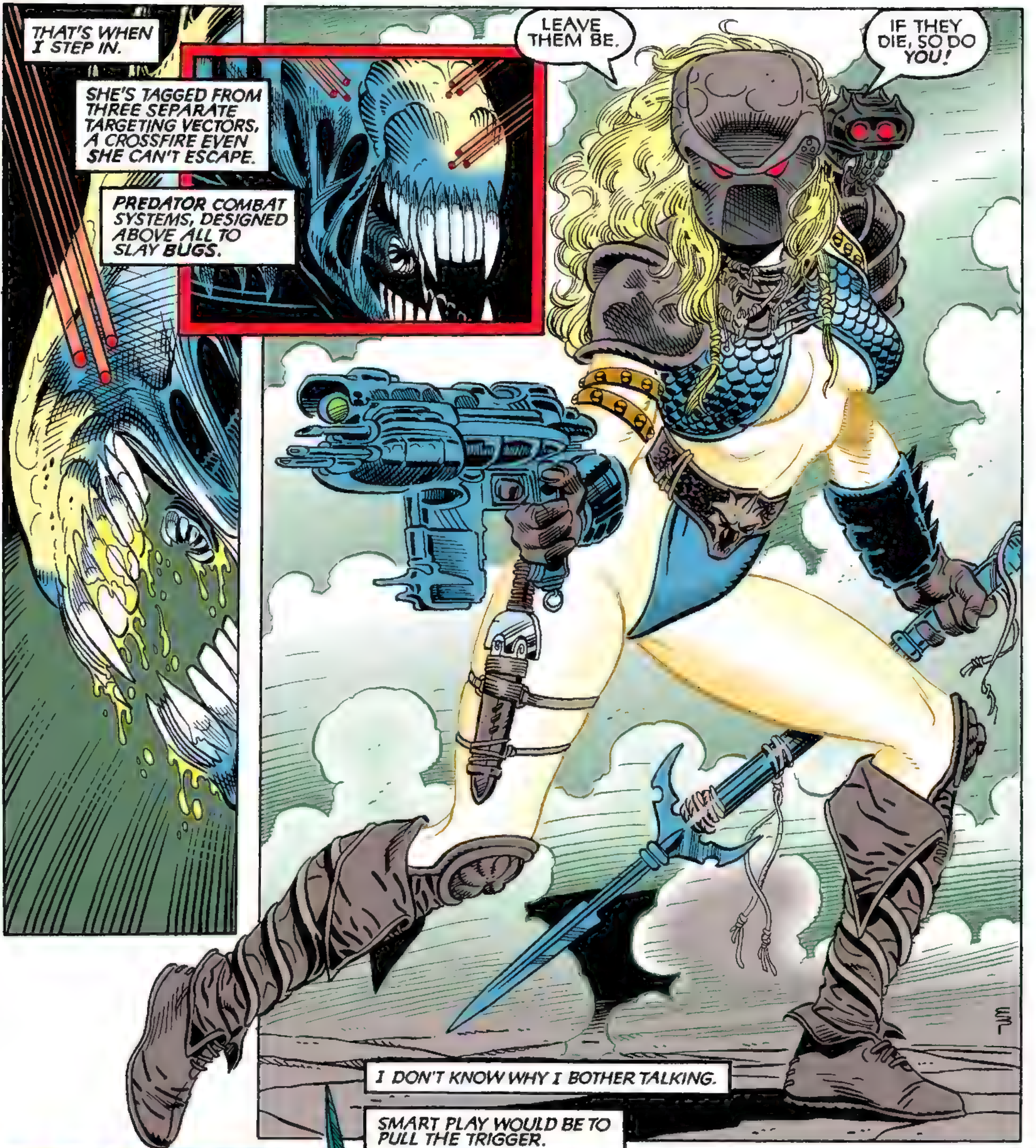
--THE NEXT GENERATION OF QUEENS, AND THE WARRIOR DRONES THAT SERVE AND PROTECT THEM.

BUT THIS QUEEN IS OLD-- AND THERE WAS ONLY ONE ROYAL EGG THAT REMAINED TO HER.

THE BEINGS IN THESE MEDPOD LIFE-SUPPORT CAPSULES THEREFORE SERVE NO PURPOSE. QUITE THE CONTRARY, THEY'RE POTENTIAL THREATS, TO HER AND HER OFFSPRING.

WHICH MEANS THEY MUST BE KILLED.





THAT'S WHEN
I STEP IN.

SHE'S TAGGED FROM
THREE SEPARATE
TARGETING VECTORS,
A CROSSFIRE EVEN
SHE CAN'T ESCAPE.

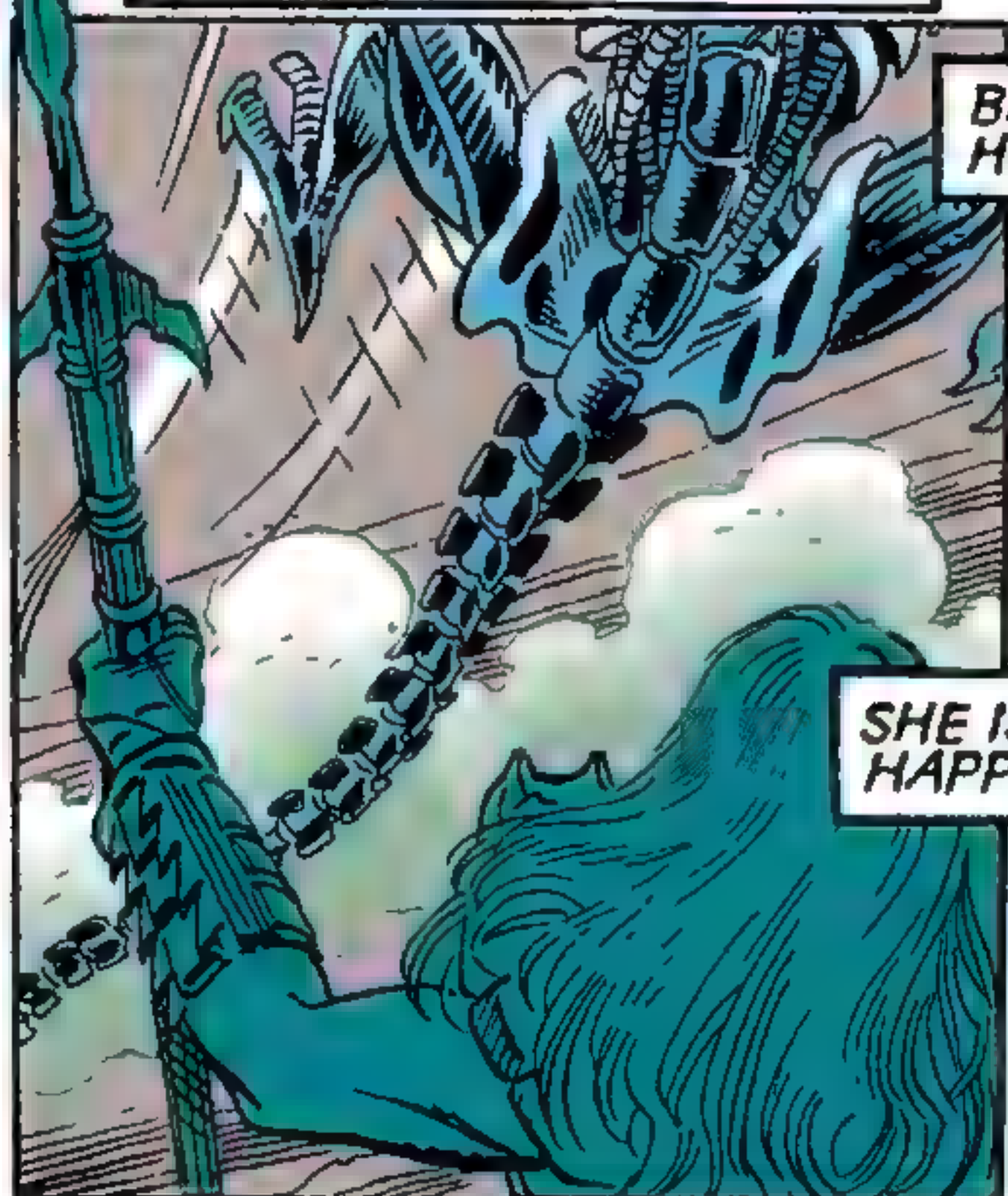
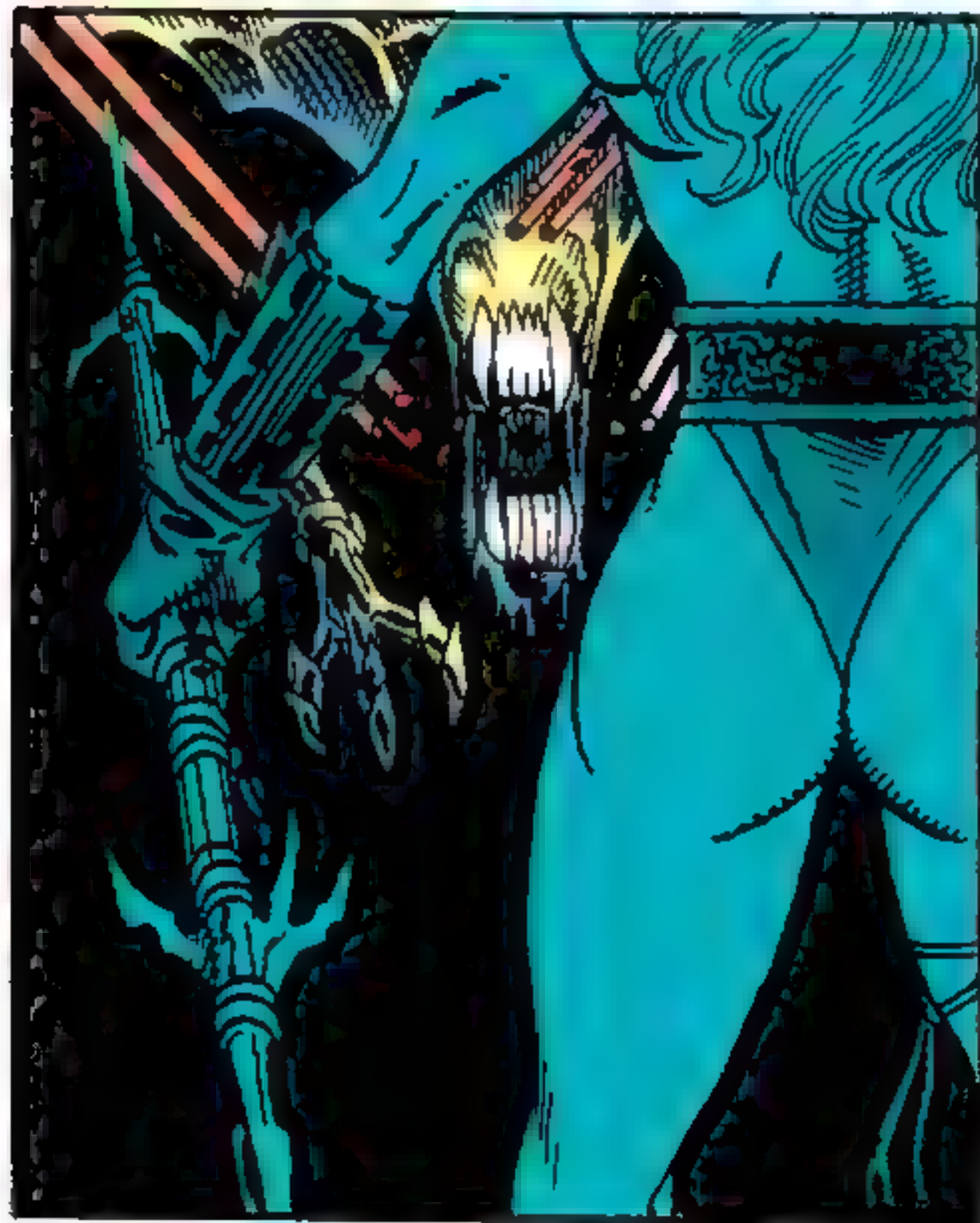
PREDATOR COMBAT
SYSTEMS, DESIGNED
ABOVE ALL TO
SLAY BUGS.

LEAVE
THEM BE.

IF THEY
DIE, SO DO
YOU!

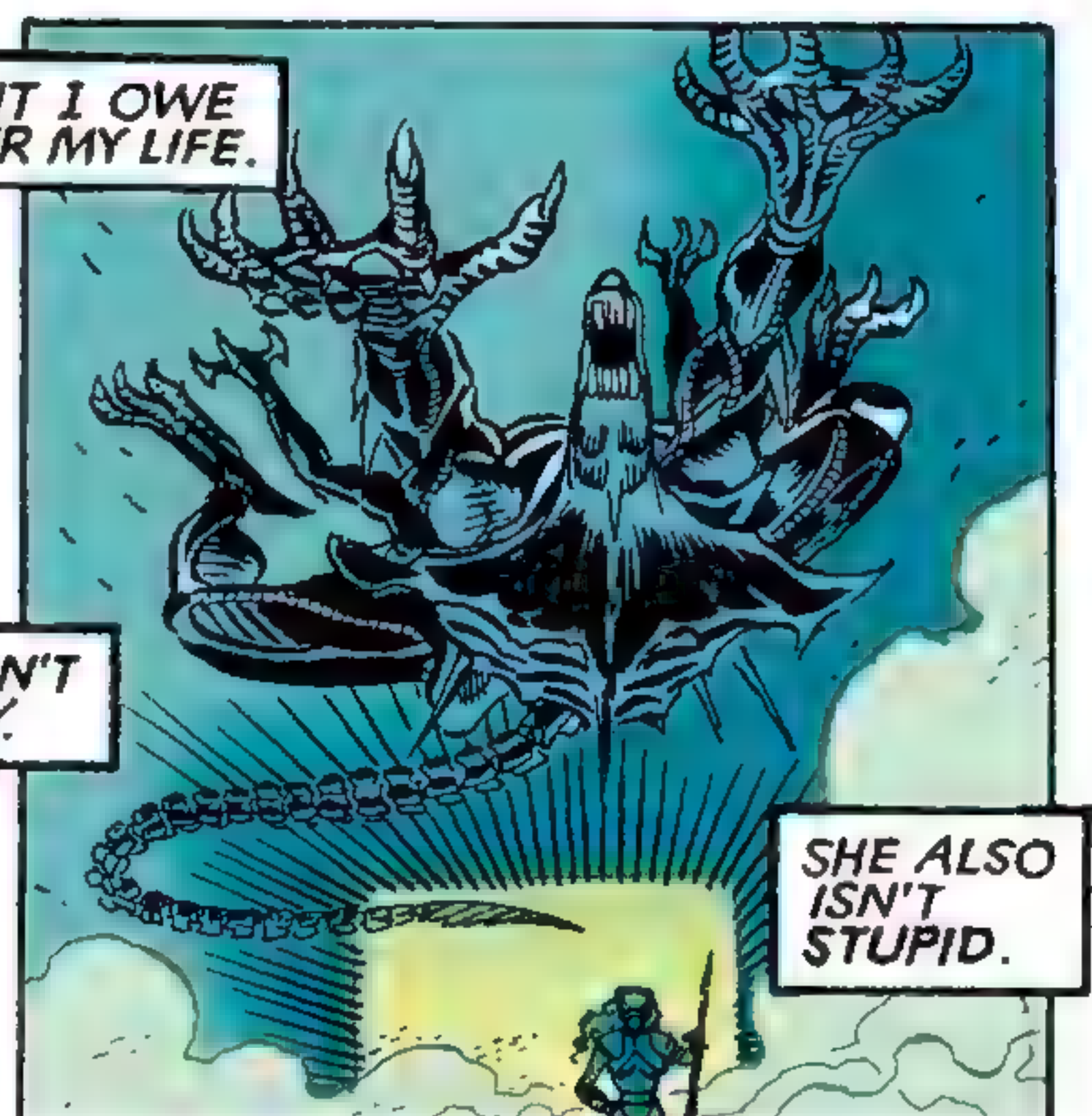
I DON'T KNOW WHY I BOTHER TALKING.

SMART PLAY WOULD BE TO
PULL THE TRIGGER.

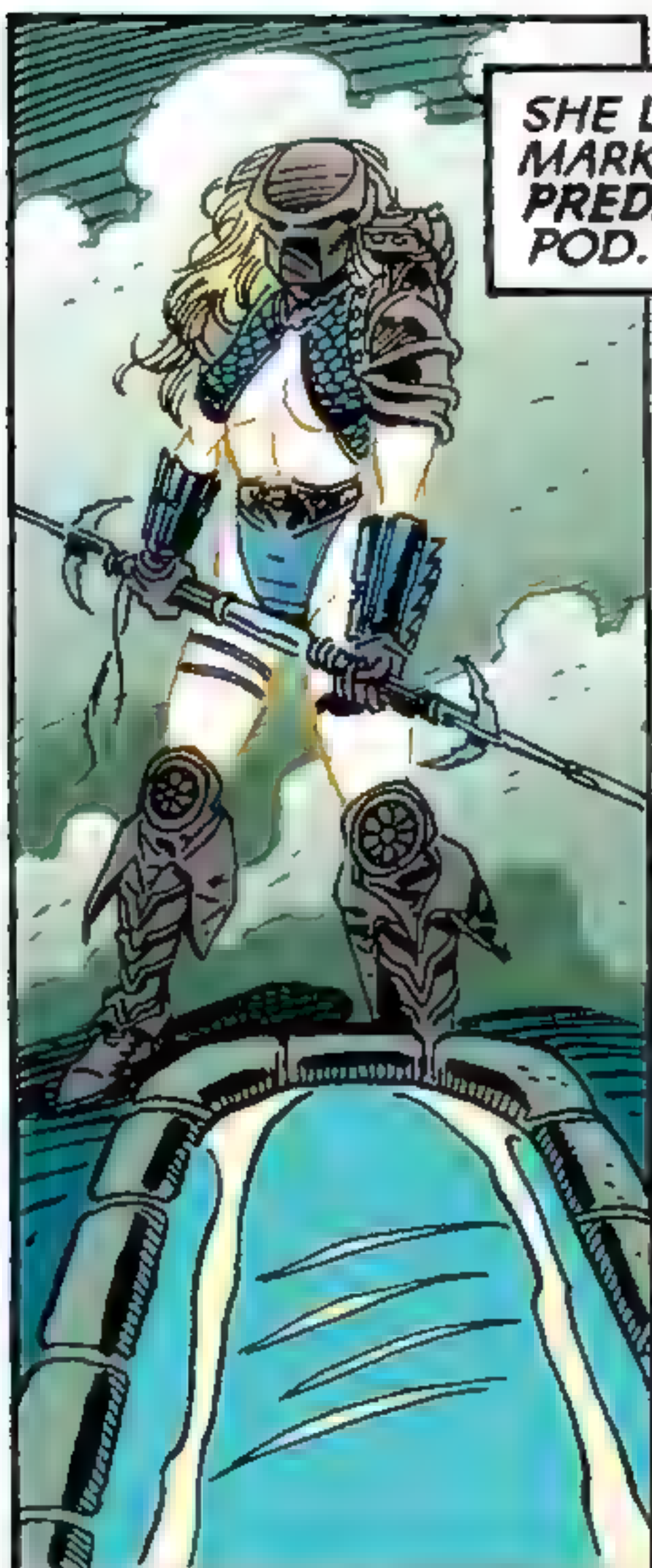


BUT I OWE
HER MY LIFE.

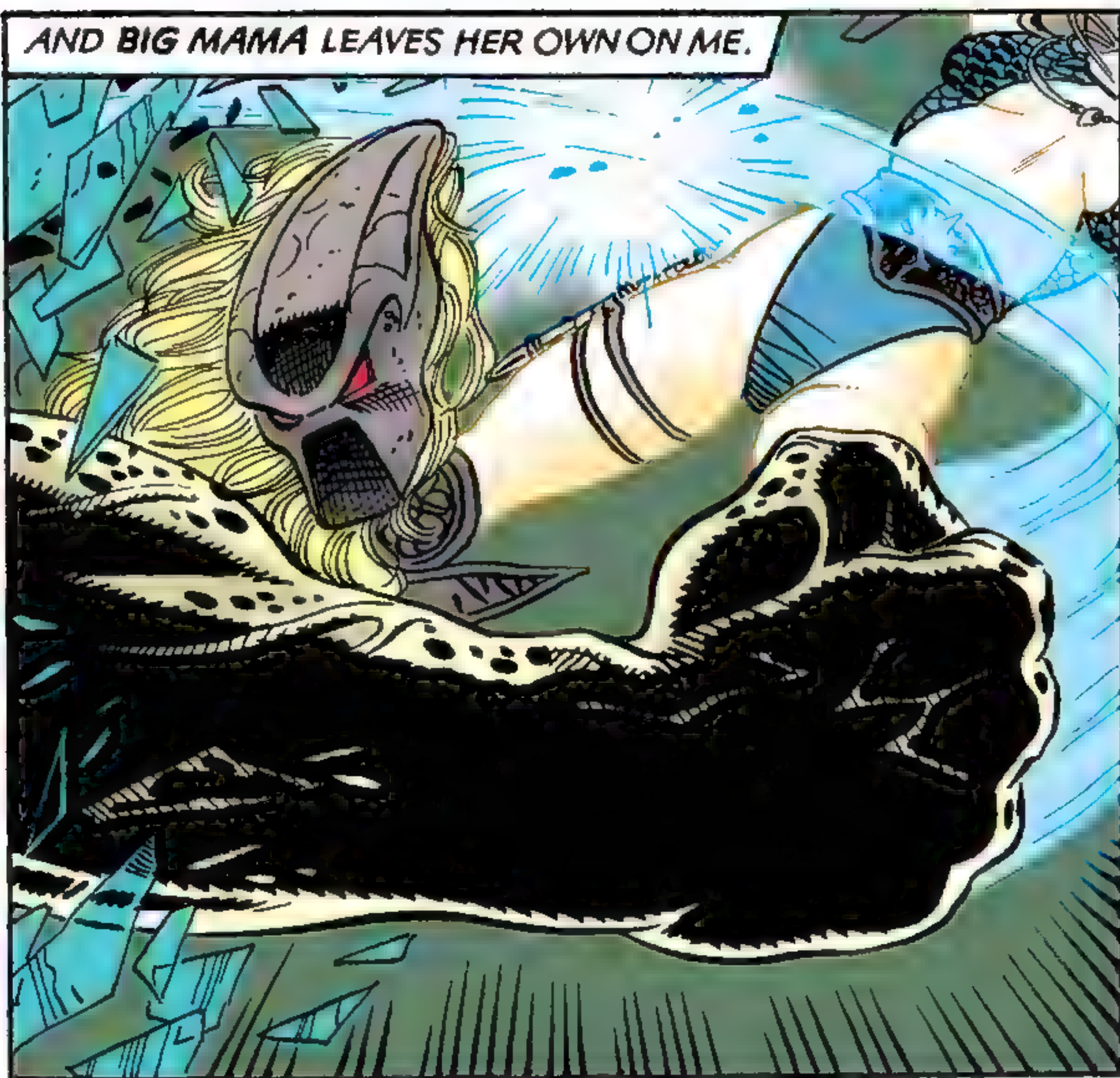
SHE ISN'T
HAPPY.



SHE ALSO
ISN'T
STUPID.



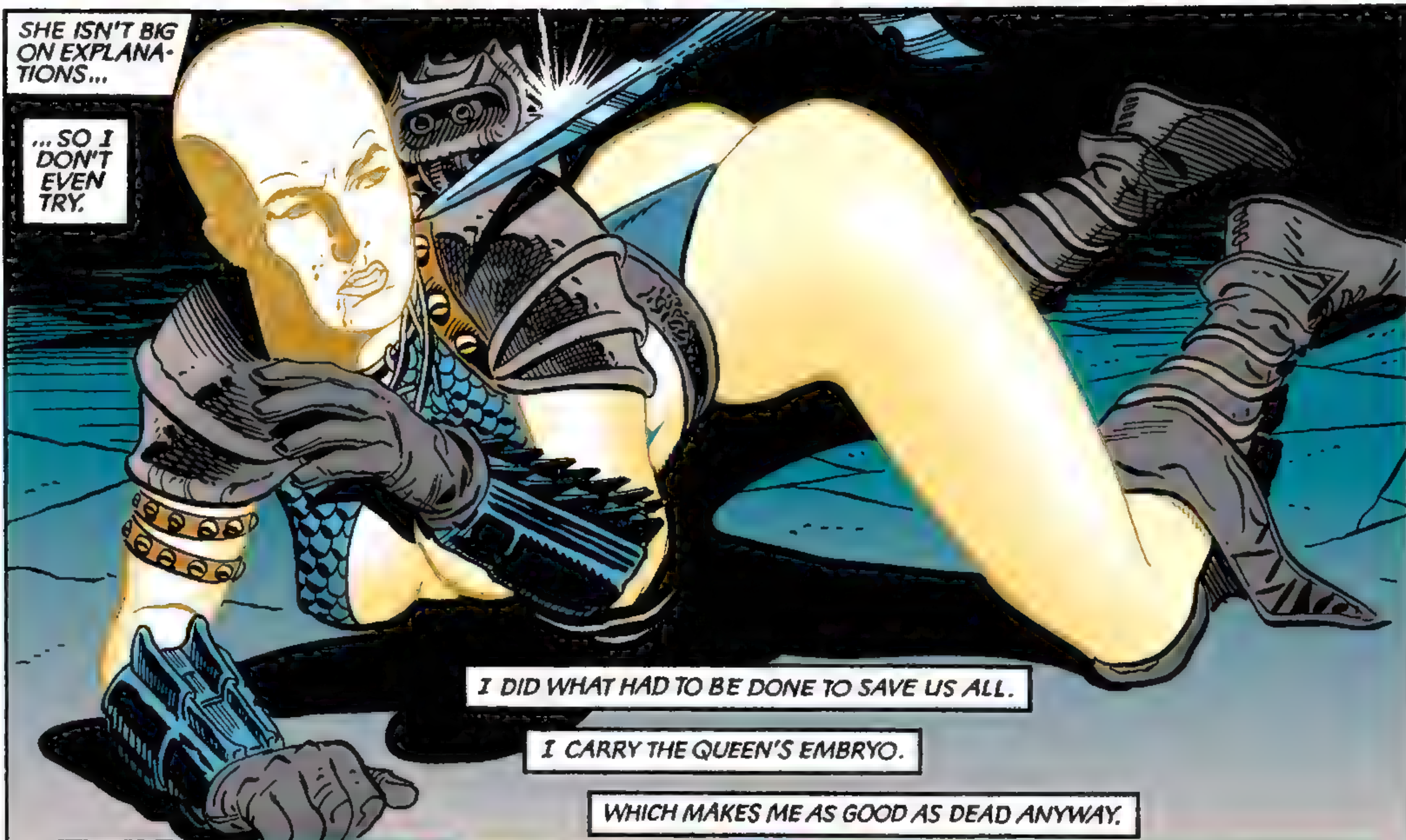
SHE LEFT HER
MARK ON THE
PREDATOR'S
POD.



AND BIG MAMA LEAVES HER OWN ON ME.

SHE ISN'T BIG
ON EXPLANA-
TIONS...

...SO I
DON'T
EVEN
TRY.



I DID WHAT HAD TO BE DONE TO SAVE US ALL.

I CARRY THE QUEEN'S EMBRYO.

WHICH MAKES ME AS GOOD AS DEAD ANYWAY.



BY THE
PREDATOR'S
LIGHTS,
KILLING ME
WOULD BE
A MERCY.

BUT WHAT IT
ALL COMES
DOWN TO
IN THE END,
FOR HER AS
MUCH AS
ME...



...IS THAT THIS HUNT
ISN'T FOR TROPHIES...

...IT'S FOR
JUSTICE.

I GIVE OUR "PASSENGERS" ANOTHER FULL DAY BEFORE I POP THEIR PODS. FOR WHAT BIG MAMA AND I HAVE IN STORE. IT'S REST THEY'LL DESPERATELY NEED.

TWO MERCS, SADIQ AND GENNA, SOLE SURVIVORS OF DEEP SPACE STATION SAMARA.

GISANDE SALAZAR, CHIEF OF SECURITY FOR MONTCALM-DELACROIX et CIE. I'M CONSORT TO THE COMPANY CHAIRMAN, LUCIEN DELACROIX.

WELL, WELL, WELL, WILL YOU LOOK AT WHAT THE HAUTE COUTURE TROPHY WIFE IS WEARING THIS SEASON!

AND A PAIR OF STRIKE FORCE RANGERS.

TOMAS SHIROW AND MARIA DeMEDICI.



GIVE IT A REST, SALAZAR.

FROM THE LOOKS OF US, I ASSUME THIS IS A FAIRLY COMPREHENSIVE MEDICAL FACILITY.

AT LEAST WE CAN ABORT CARYN'S EMBRYO--!

IT STAYS, SHIROW. IT HAS TO.

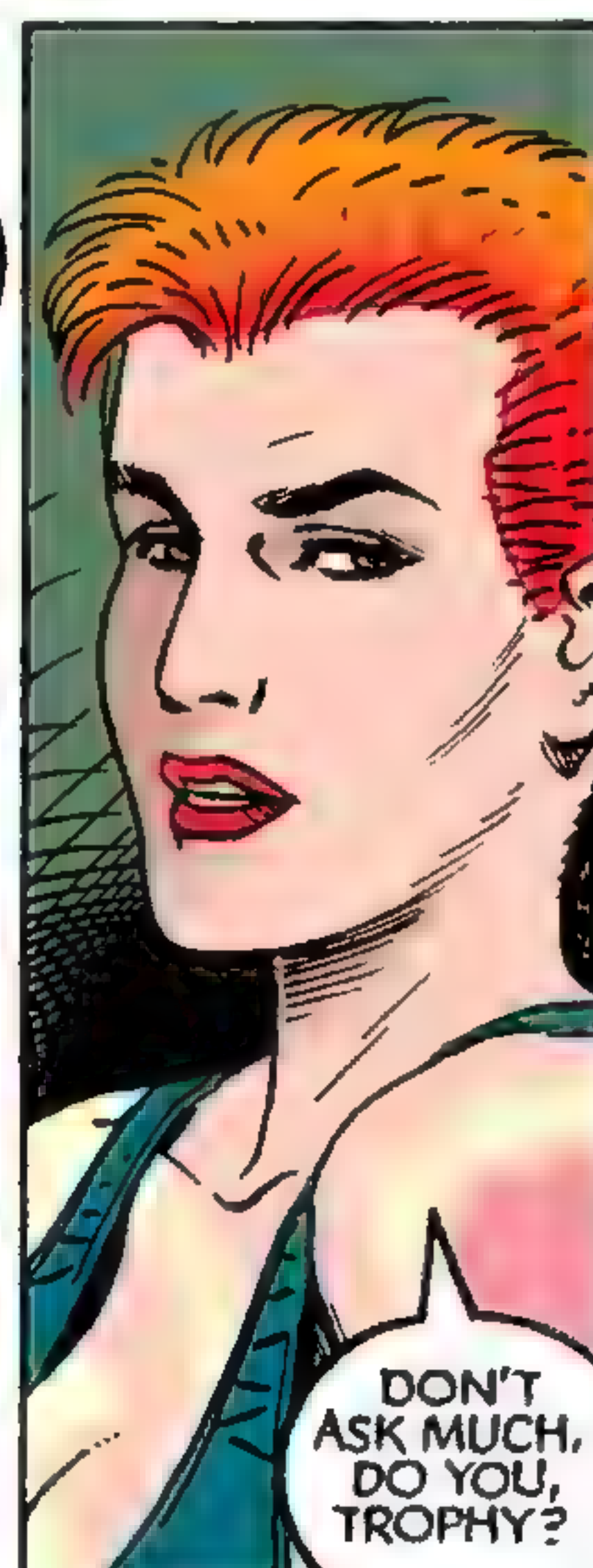
MATER CHRIST!! YOU MEAN THE ALIEN--!



SHE'S NOT OUR ENEMY, MARIA.

WE HAVE A COMMON CAUSE, ALL OF US-- ALIEN, PREDATOR, HUMAN. WORKING TOGETHER, WE MIGHT JUST FIND A WAY THROUGH TO WIN.

IF YOU WANT THAT, YOU'LL HAVE TO TRUST ME.



DON'T ASK MUCH, DO YOU, TROPHY?



CLOTHES ARE A MIX
OF PREDATOR GEAR
AND ANYTHING
LEFT OVER FROM
PREVIOUS HUNTS.

THE SNIGGERS AND
WISECRACKS AND
GRIPES LAST UNTIL
I HAND OUT
WEAPONS.

THEY AREN'T FOR SHOW.

AND NOBODY
SAYS A WORD
WHEN I
TELL THEM...

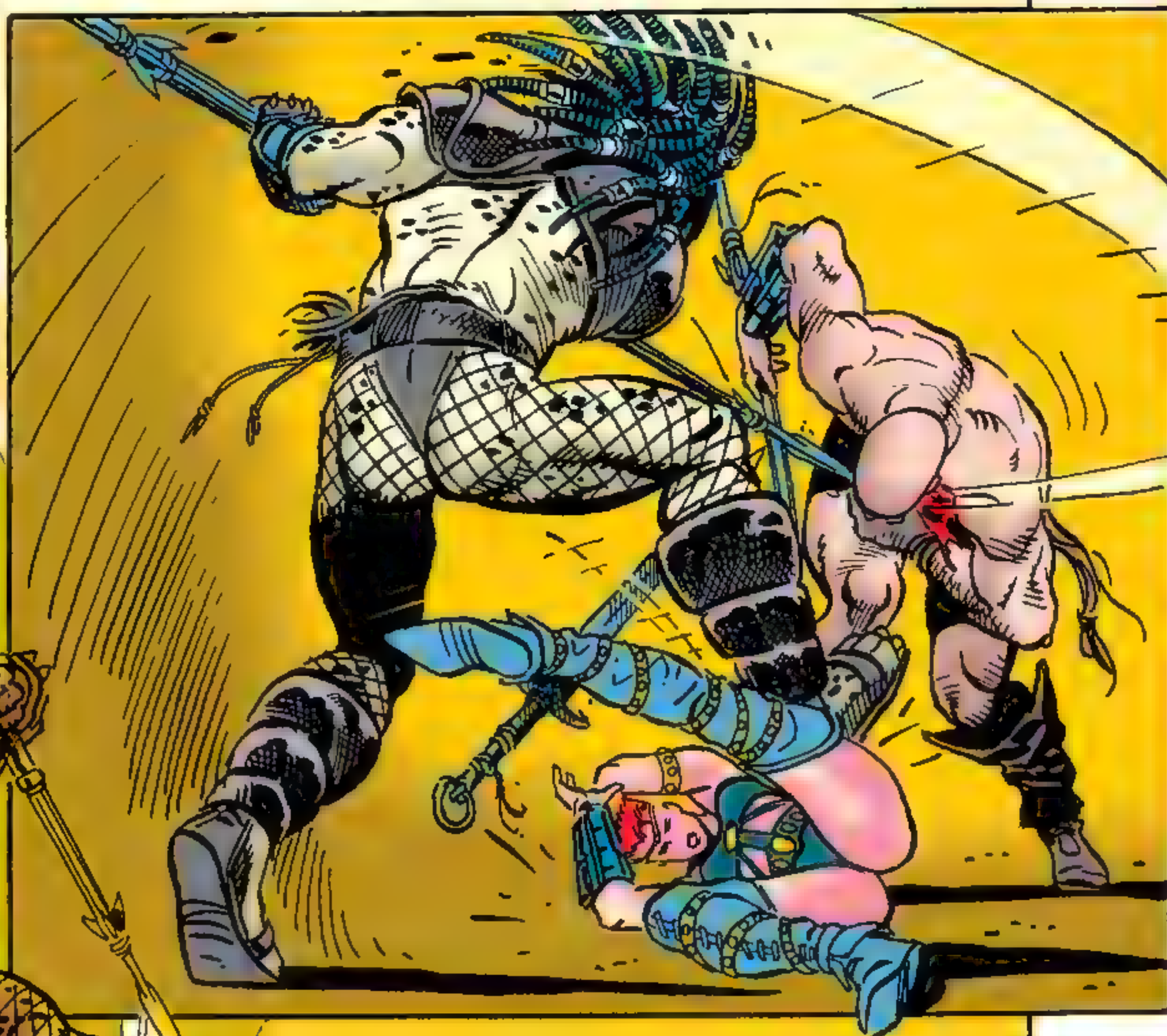
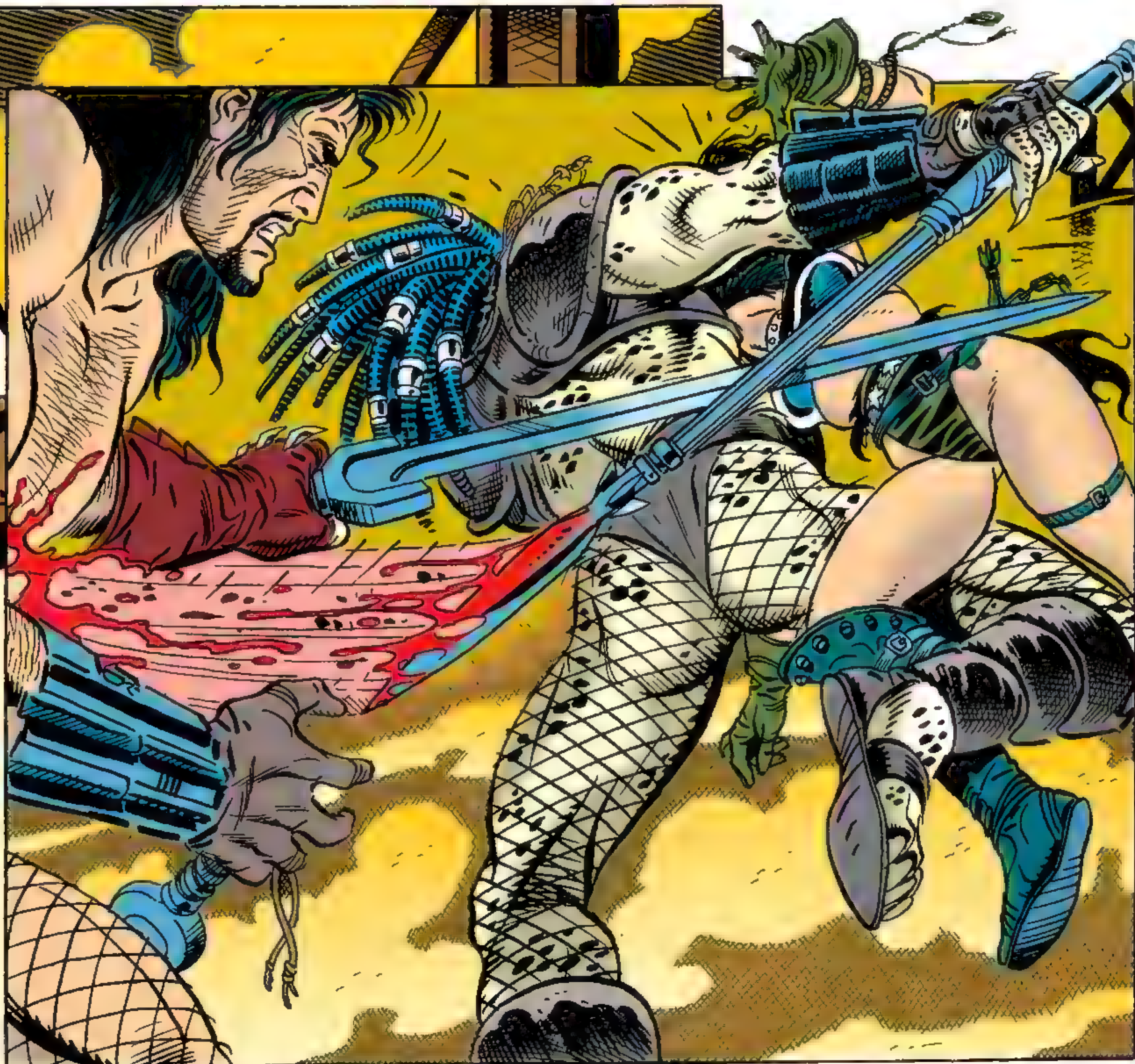
...TO BRING
ME BACK
BIG MAMA'S
HEAD AND
HEART.



PREDATORS
AREN'T BIG
ON THEORY.

WITH THEM,
YOU LEARN
BY DOING.

THE FIVE OF THEM
ARE SUPERBLY
TRAINED AND
SUPERBLY SKILLED--
IN MANY WAYS,
THE BEST
HUMANITY HAS
TO OFFER.



IT DOESN'T SAVE THEM.

THE MASSACRE LASTS LESS THAN A MINUTE. WHEN IT'S OVER, THE WALKING WOUNDED HELP THOSE MORE SERIOUSLY INJURED BACK INTO THE MEDPODS.

MARIA IS AS BADLY HURT AS SHIROW, BUT SHE REFUSES TO BE SEEN TO UNTIL SHE'S SURE HE'S OUT OF DANGER.

HELLUVA TEACHING PHILOSOPHY, CARYN!

WORKED FOR ME.

WHEN?!

I'M SORRY. I... DON'T KNOW.

NO OFFENSE, BUT TROPHIES ARE GEN-ENGINEERED FROM INCEPTION.

I'VE SEEN YOUR FILE, CARYN. YOU WERE A CUSTOM DESIGN FOR LUCIEN DELACROIX, SPECIALLY EXECUTED BY HIS PET COMPUTER, TOY. YOU'VE BEEN WITH HIM YOUR ENTIRE LIFE.

THEN SOMEBODY'S LYING. EITHER MY MEMORIES--OR YOUR FILES.

MARIA, NEITHER OF US HAS TIME FOR THIS. YOU NEED TREATMENT. YOU'LL BE FINE COME TOMORROW--WE CAN TALK THEN.

AND AFTER WE TALK, WHAT'S NEXT? ROUND TWO?

YOU KEEP TRYING 'TIL YOU GET IT RIGHT.

YOU'RE SERIOUS.

Oh, JOY. IF WE DON'T WANT TO BLEED, WE'D BETTER GET BETTER.

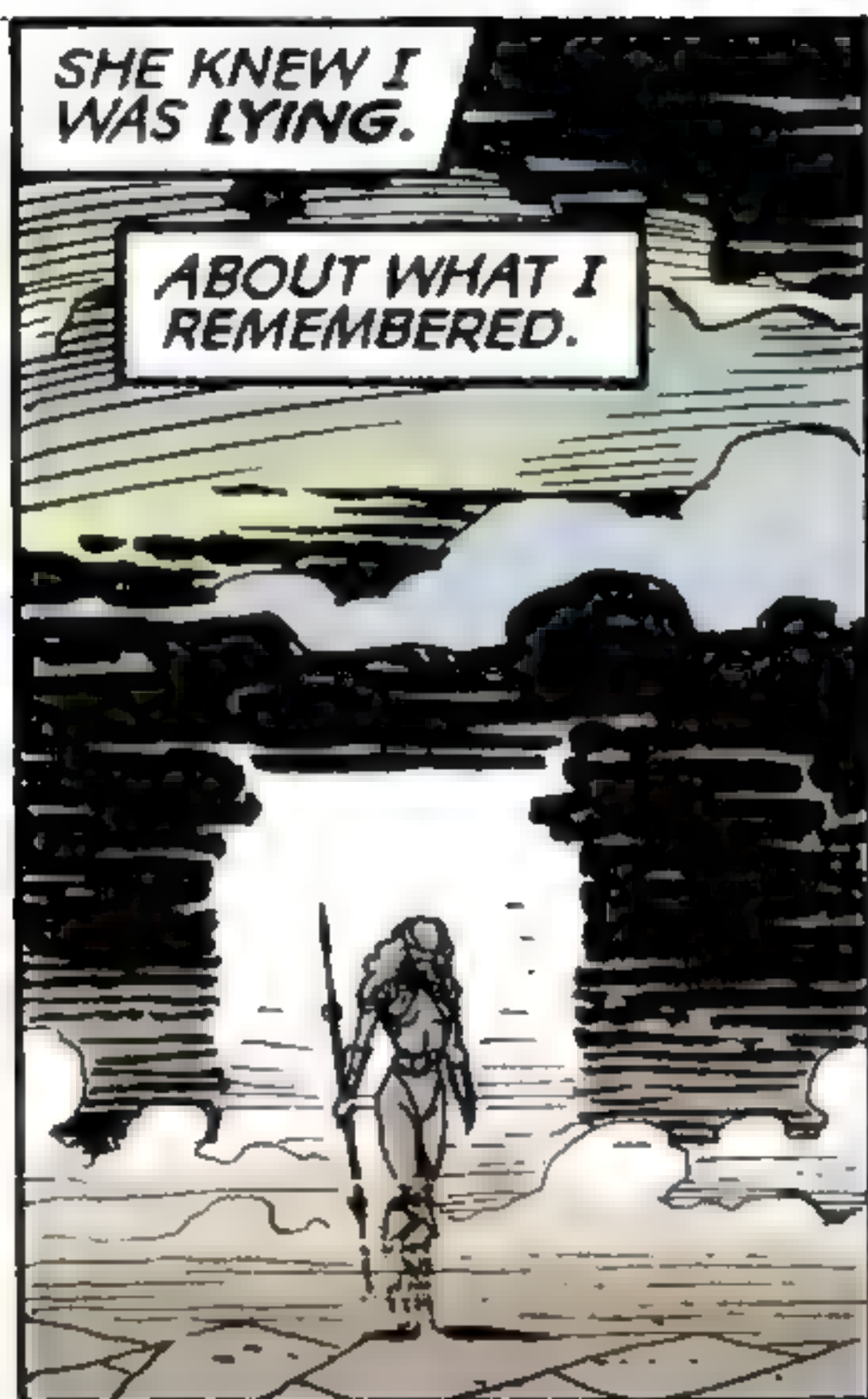
AND FOR THE SAKE OF ARGUMENT... ...SUPPOSE WE DON'T.

THEN PERHAPS, AFTER ONE SESSION...

...YOU DON'T GET BETTER.

NATURAL SELECTION, PREDATOR STYLE. SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST, TAKEN TO ITS ULTIMATE.

I THINK I LIKE THAT.

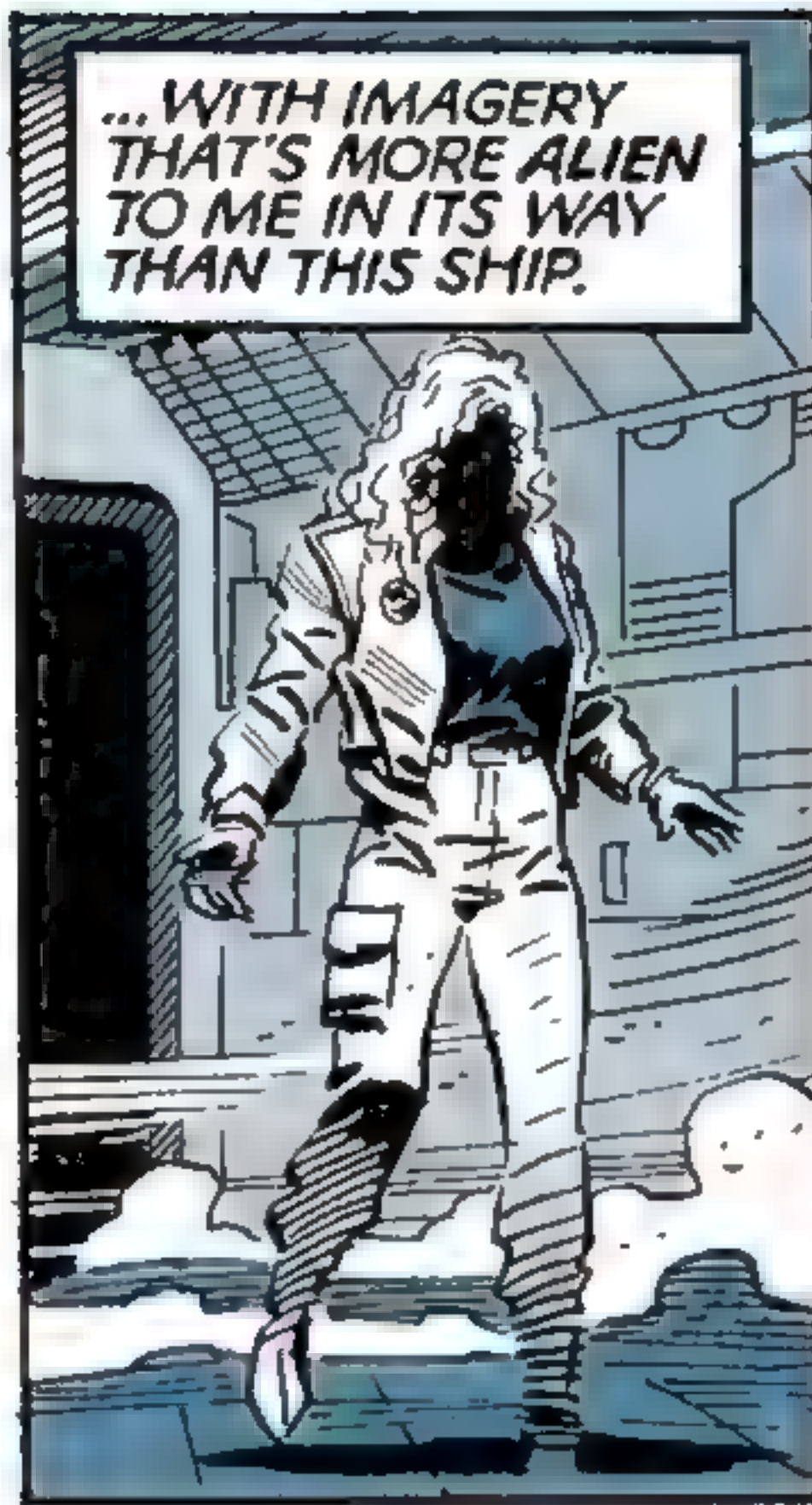


SHE KNEW I WAS LYING.

ABOUT WHAT I REMEMBERED.



EVERYWHERE I TURN LATELY, MY HEAD'S CHOCK-A-BLOCK TO BURSTING...



...WITH IMAGERY THAT'S MORE ALIEN TO ME IN ITS WAY THAN THIS SHIP.



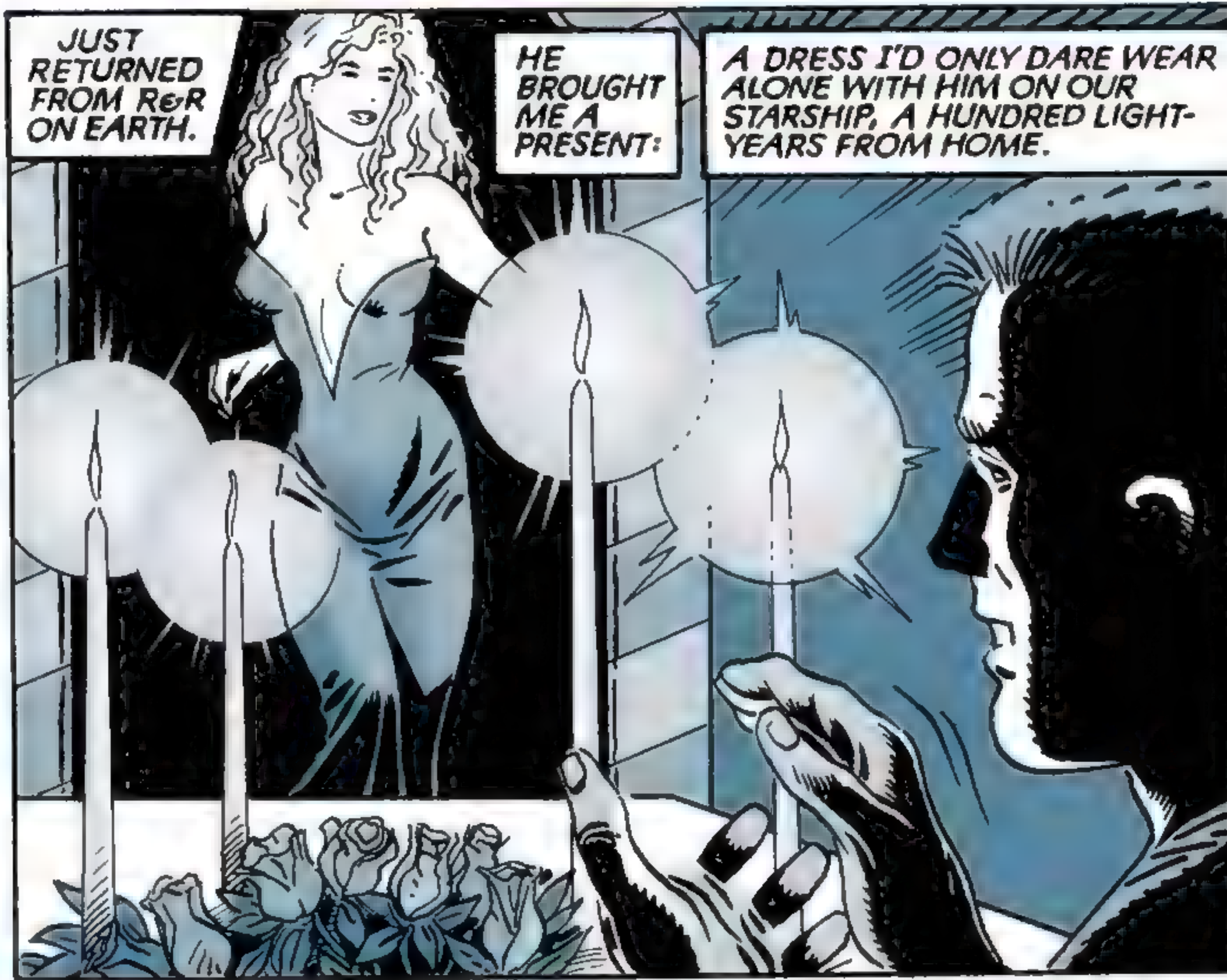
MISS ME?

STEPHAN MADRIGAL. COMMANDER, U.S. NAVY. ATTACHED TO THE NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION.



DAMN STRAIGHT, SWABIE!

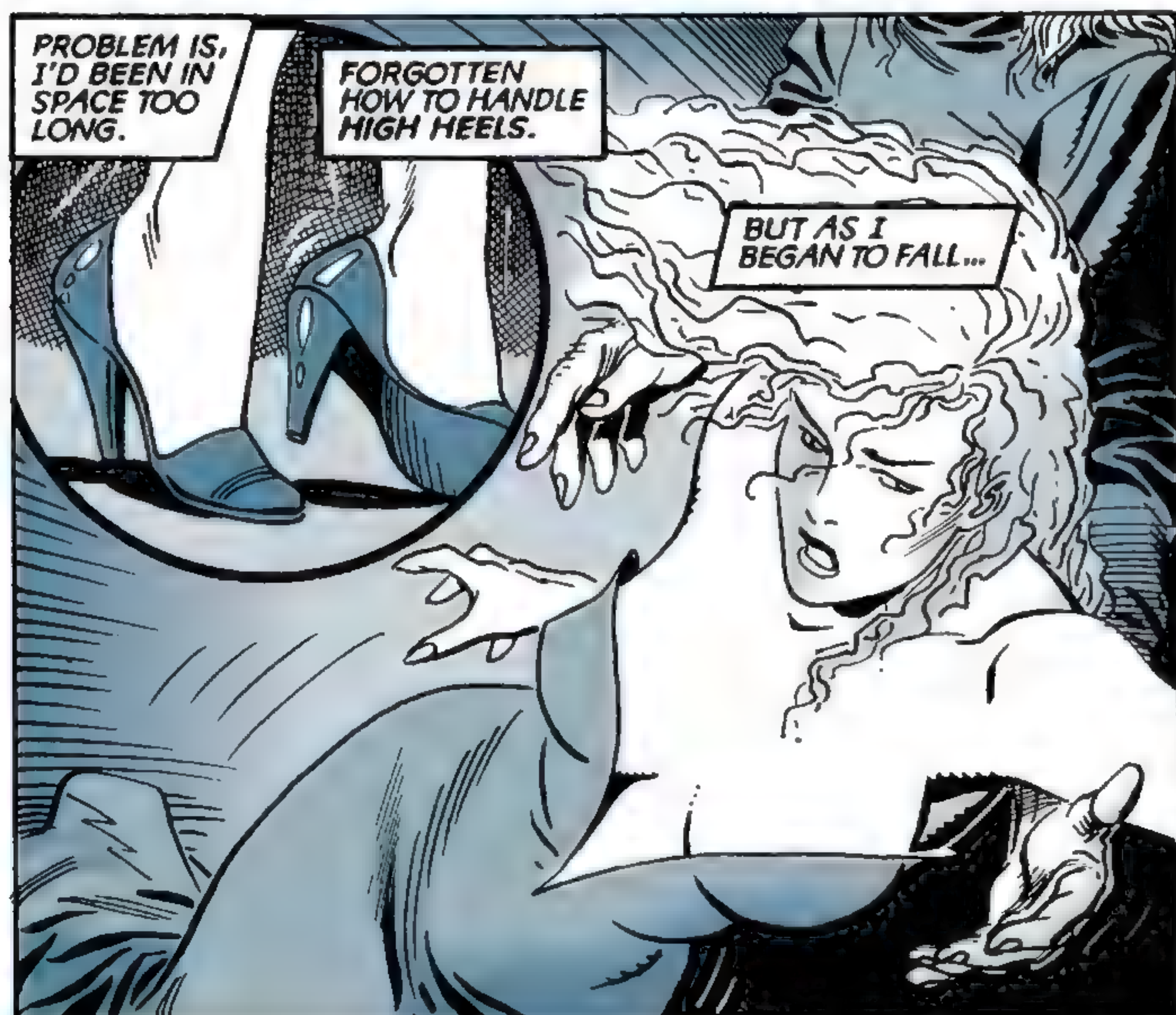
HE WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MAN.



JUST RETURNED FROM R&R ON EARTH.

HE BROUGHT ME A PRESENT:

A DRESS I'D ONLY DARE WEAR ALONE WITH HIM ON OUR STARSHIP, A HUNDRED LIGHT-YEARS FROM HOME.



PROBLEM IS, I'D BEEN IN SPACE TOO LONG.

FORGOTTEN HOW TO HANDLE HIGH HEELS.

BUT AS I BEGAN TO FALL...



SURPRISE, SURPRISE, MY PET.

BOBBY DeMATIER?!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? THIS IS A RESTRICTED SYSTEM!

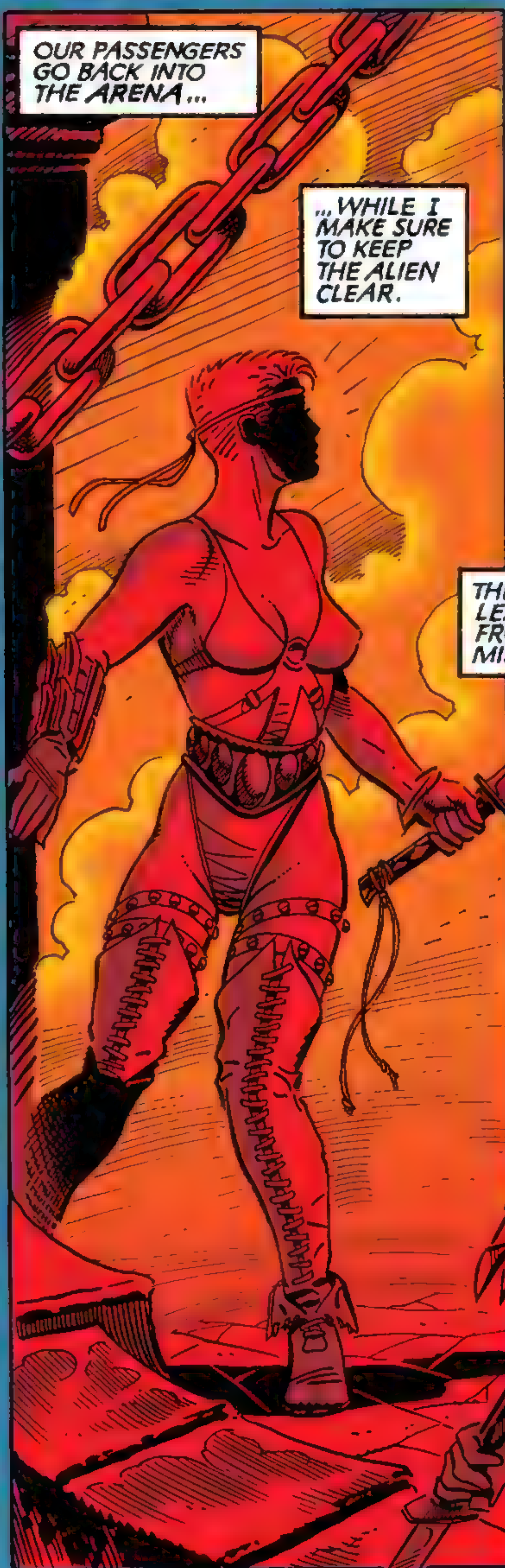
STEPHAN, WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON?!

THE NEXT MORNING,
WE BEGIN AGAIN.



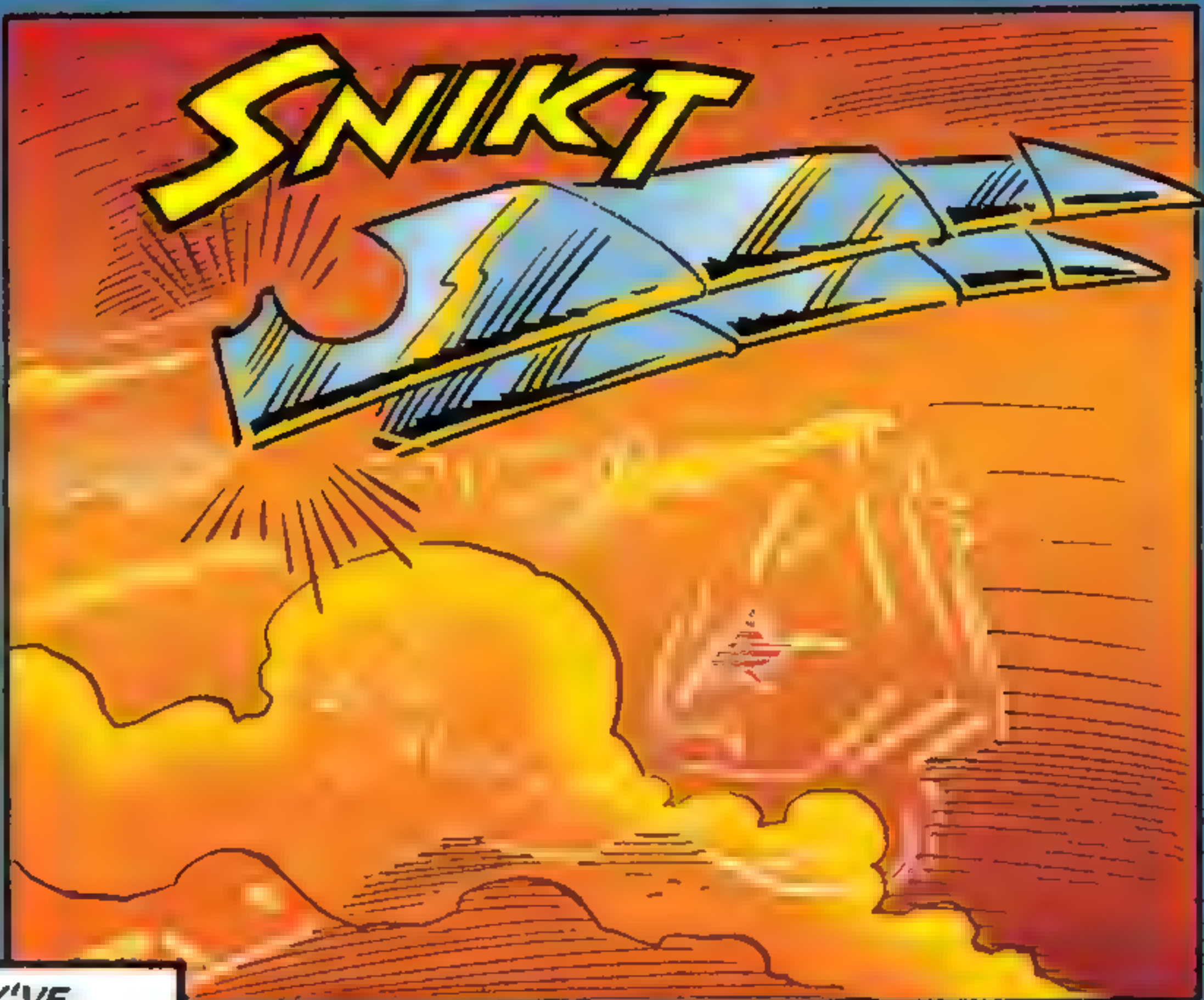
OUR PASSENGERS
GO BACK INTO
THE ARENA...

...WHILE I
MAKE SURE
TO KEEP
THE ALIEN
CLEAR.



THEY'VE
LEARNED
FROM THEIR
MISTAKES.

SNIKT



IT DOESN'T
SAVE THEM.

I SEE THEIR BLOOD...

... AND REMEMBER THE TASTE OF MY OWN...

...ALONG WITH THE SICK, ACID FEELING OF BETRAYAL.

THIS IS A GOOD DEAL, WOMAN, A PERFECT SETUP! IT'S GOING TO MAKE US *RICH*! YOU'RE A *FOOL* TO PASS IT BY!

I SWORE AN *OATH*, COMMANDER. SO DID YOU.

DON'T YOU GET HOLIER-THAN-THOU WITH ME-- I'M BETRAYING *NOTHING*!

THOSE AREN'T PEOPLE DOWN THERE-- THEY AREN'T EVEN *HUMAN*! A LOUSY LITTLE OUTPOST, WHO THE HELL CARES WHAT HAPPENS TO THEM?

THE FOLKS WHO SENT THEM, MAYBE?

WHAT, YOU FIGURE THIS IS THE 17TH CENTURY-- WE CAN TAKE WHAT WE WANT, *SLAUGHTER* WHOMEVER WE PLEASE?

HUMAN HISTORY, HONEY, *HUMAN NATURE*.

DAMN YOU, MADRIGAL, WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE *BETTER* THAN THAT!

PLUS ÇA CHANGE, PLUS C'EST LA MÊME CHOSE, *BÉBÉ*!

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME.

GO TO *HELL*!

LADIES FIRST.

OURS HAD BEEN A STANDARD ROVER MISSION, CHARTING NEW SYSTEMS AND RUNNING PRELIMINARY SURVEYS OF THEIR PLANETS.

UNTIL SEVEN MONTHS AGO...

...WHEN WE DISCOVERED THIS PARTICULAR MUDBALL WAS INHABITED.

AND NOT BY AN INDIGENOUS SPECIES.

SHIPS TRAVEL FASTER THAN RADIO, SO IT WAS MADRIGAL-- MY TRUSTED PARTNER-- WHO BROUGHT HOME OUR NEWS, TOGETHER WITH ALL THE SCAN DATA WE'D ACCUMULATED.

I GUESS, ALONG THE WAY, HE DECIDED THE PRIVATE SECTOR OFFERED MORE OPPORTUNITY.

Y'ASK ME, IT'S MADRIGAL'S CALL.

IF THE BITCH AIN'T WITH THE PROGRAM, SHE'S BETTER OFF BREATHIN' VACUUM.

YEAH, WELL, DeMATIER HAS THE HOTS FOR HER *DNA*--LIKES THE WAY IT KINKS OR WHAT-EVER. GOT PLANS FOR HER, LIKE HE DOES WITH THOSE EXOTICS PLANETSIDES.

MAN, IN THAT CASE, KILLIN' HER BE DOIN' THE BITCH A KINDNESS--

Σ--WHA--?!

SPIKE-HEEL KICK TO THE PATELLA. VERY NASTY. VERY EFFECTIVE.

I TOOK THEM DOWN HARD.

AND THEN MADE SURE THEY DIDN'T GET UP.



THE NEXT MORNING, WHEN EVERYONE'S FULLY RECOVERED, WE BEGIN AGAIN.

A LITTLE LOWER ON THE FORWARD THRUST, TOMMY, SO YOU'LL BE SURE TO STRIKE HOME UNDER THE STERNUM.

AND, NEXT TIME, BRING THE BLADE AROUND A BIT FASTER.

COPY. HOW LONG YOU FIGURE WE'VE BEEN AT THIS, MARIA?

NOT LONG ENOUGH, BRIGHT EYES. WE KEEP GETTING WAXED.

NOT AS QUICKLY ANYMORE, AND WE'VE BEEN GETTING IN SOME FAIR SHOTS OF OUR OWN.

WE'RE GETTING BETTER.

EVERY DAY, IN EVERY WAY.

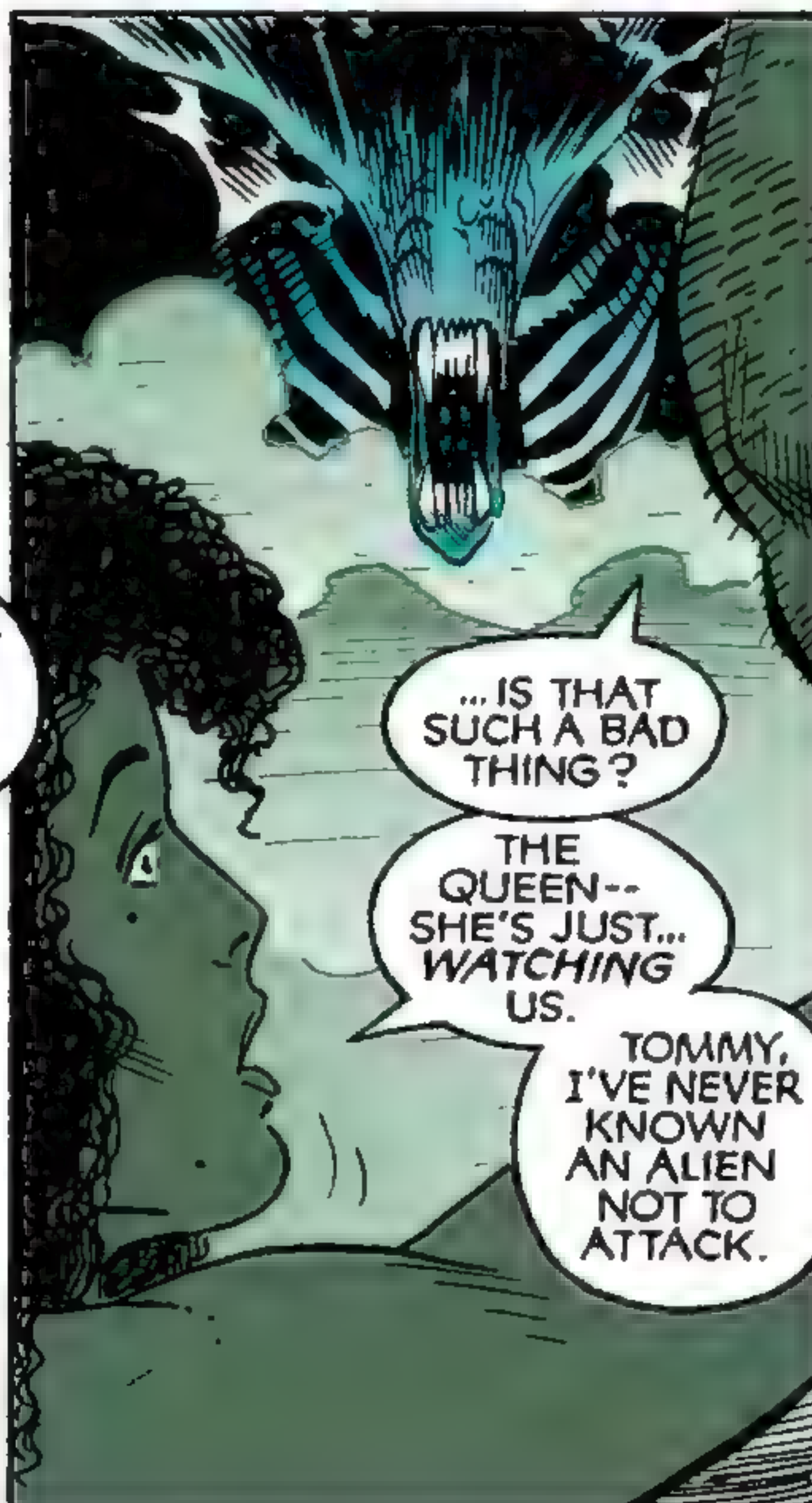
I'M SERIOUS! HAVE YOU LOOKED IN A MIRROR LATELY? YOU ARE *BLUFF*, WOMAN.



WE *ALL* ARE-- STRONGER, FASTER, TOUGHER, OUR EVERY SENSE PUSHED TO ITS PERCEPTUAL LIMIT.

WE'RE NOT JUST BEING "*HEALED*," SHIROW, WE'RE BEING *REBUILT*.

CONSIDERING WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST...



...IS THAT SUCH A BAD THING?

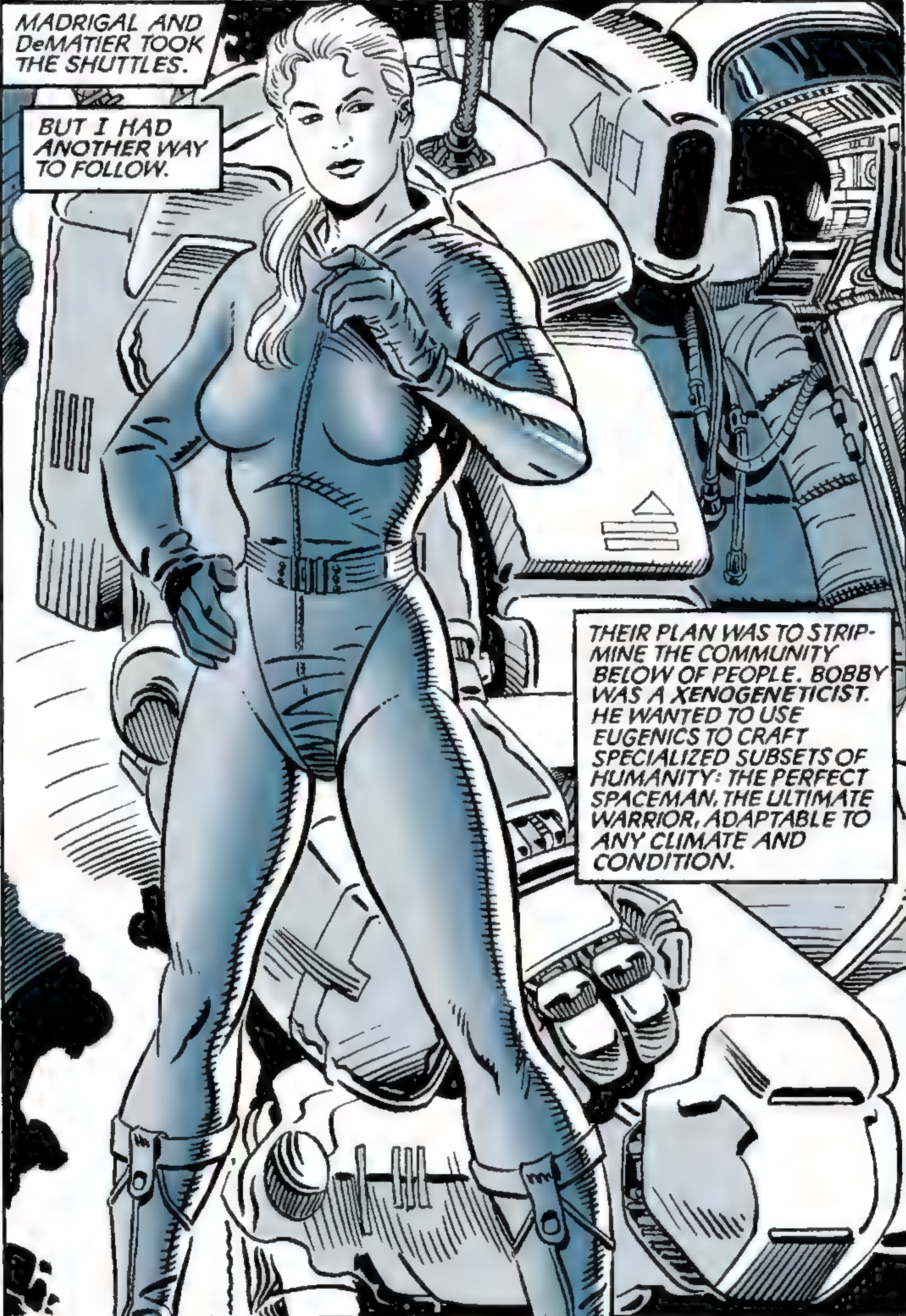
THE QUEEN-- SHE'S JUST... *WATCHING* US.

TOMMY, I'VE NEVER KNOWN AN ALIEN NOT TO ATTACK.



MAKES YOU *WONDER*, DOESN'T IT? I MEAN, IF SHE'S OUR "*FRIEND*"...

...WHAT THE HELL ARE WE UP AGAINST?



MADRIGAL AND DeMATIER TOOK THE SHUTTLES.

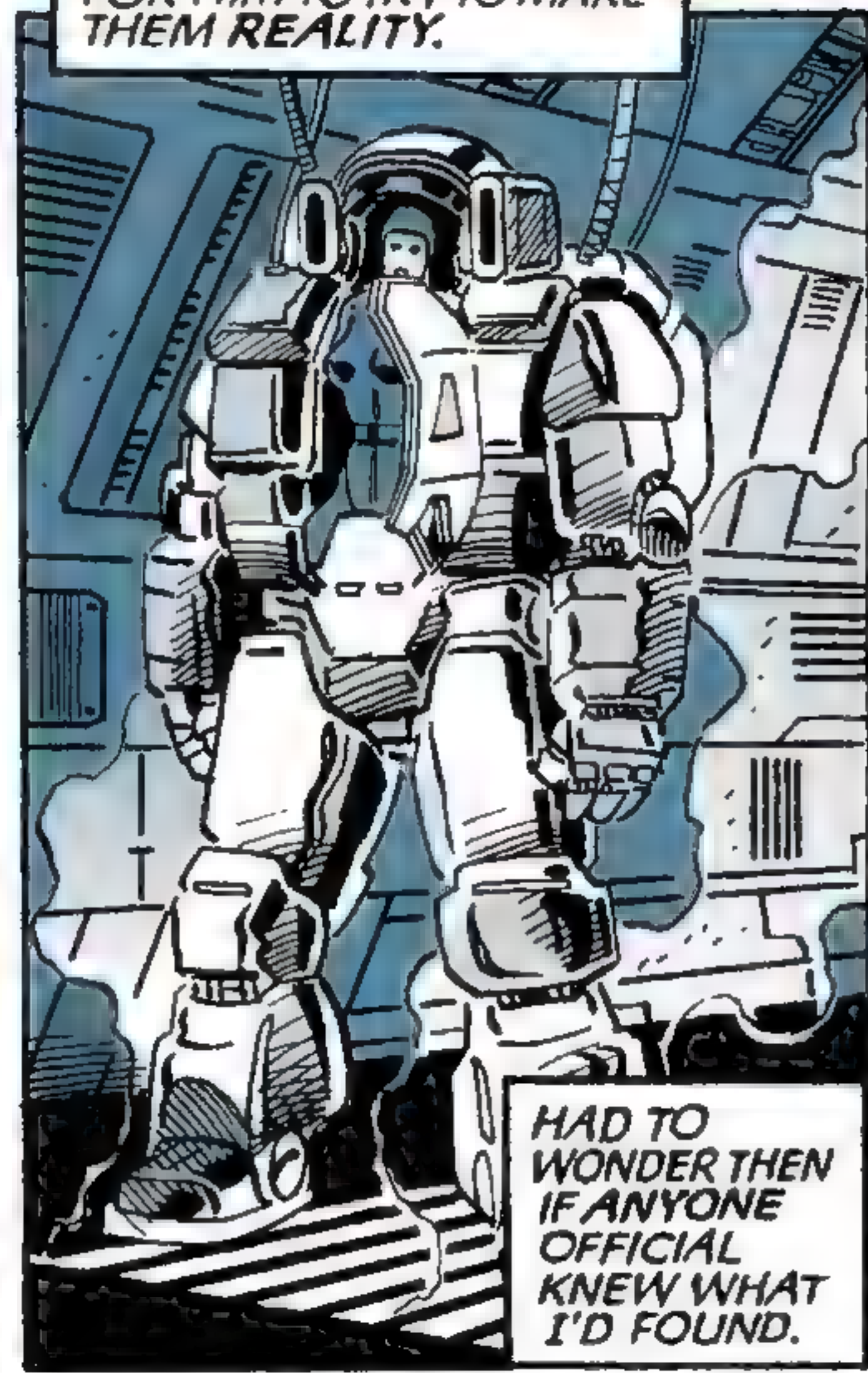
BUT I HAD ANOTHER WAY TO FOLLOW.

THEIR PLAN WAS TO STRIP-MINE THE COMMUNITY BELOW OF PEOPLE. BOBBY WAS A XENOGENETICIST. HE WANTED TO USE EUGENICS TO CRAFT SPECIALIZED SUBSETS OF HUMANITY: THE PERFECT SPACEMAN, THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR, ADAPTABLE TO ANY CLIMATE AND CONDITION.

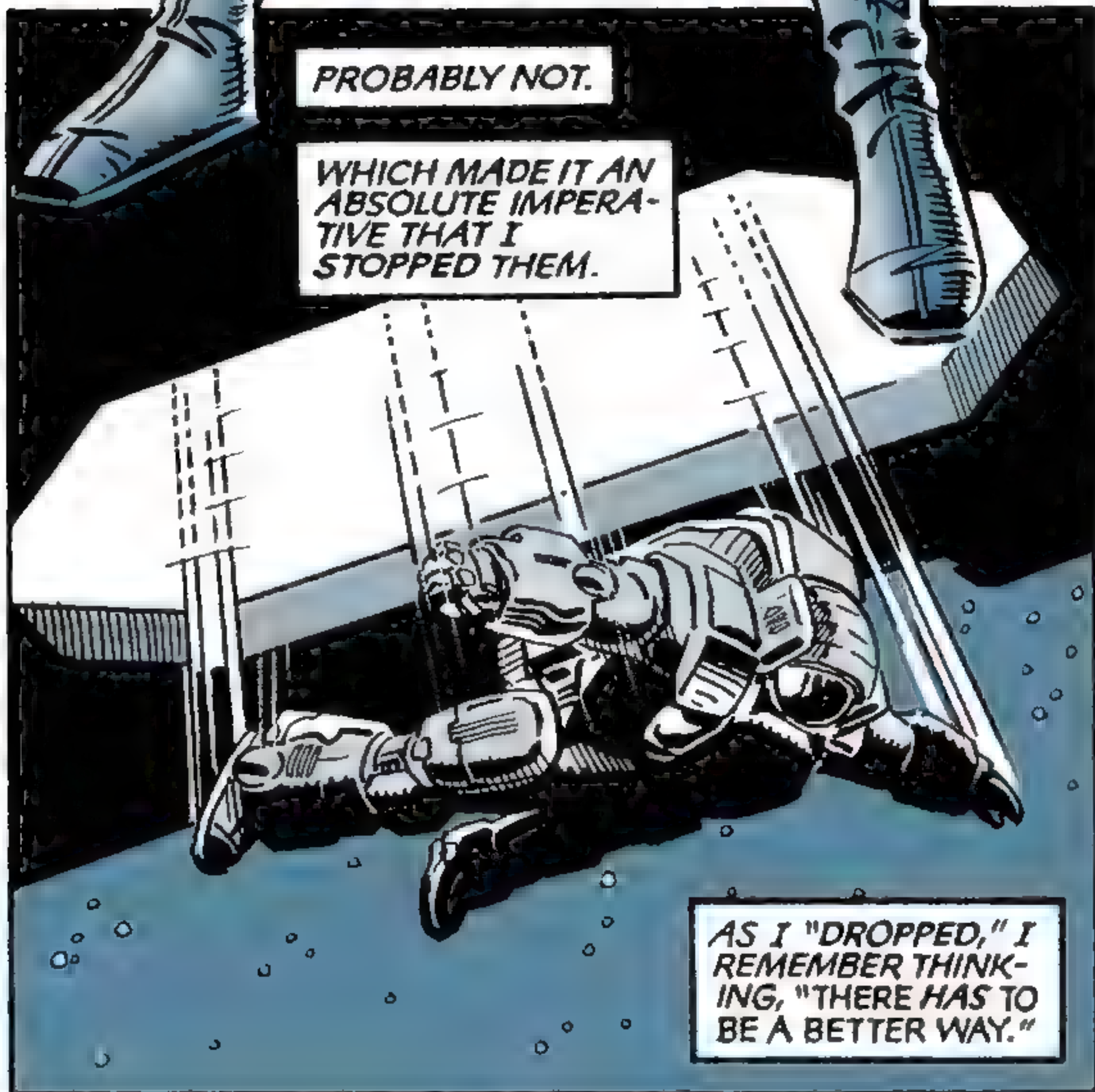


UP 'TIL NOW, THEY WERE JUST CRACKPOT THEORIES.

MY DISCOVERY OFFERED UP IDEAL RAW MATERIAL FOR HIM TO TRY TO MAKE THEM REALITY.



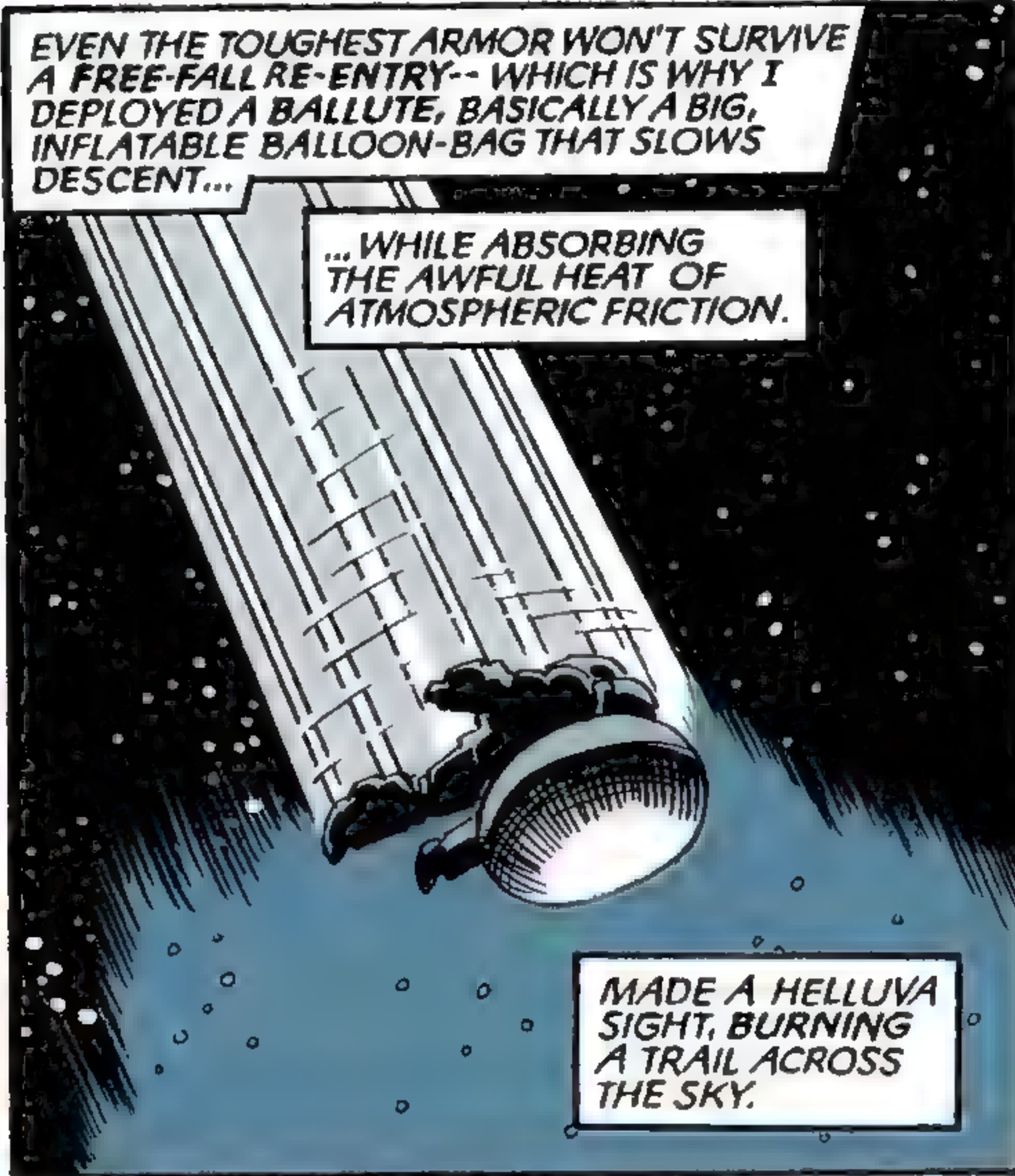
HAD TO WONDER THEN IF ANYONE OFFICIAL KNEW WHAT I'D FOUND.



PROBABLY NOT.

WHICH MADE IT AN ABSOLUTE IMPERATIVE THAT I STOPPED THEM.

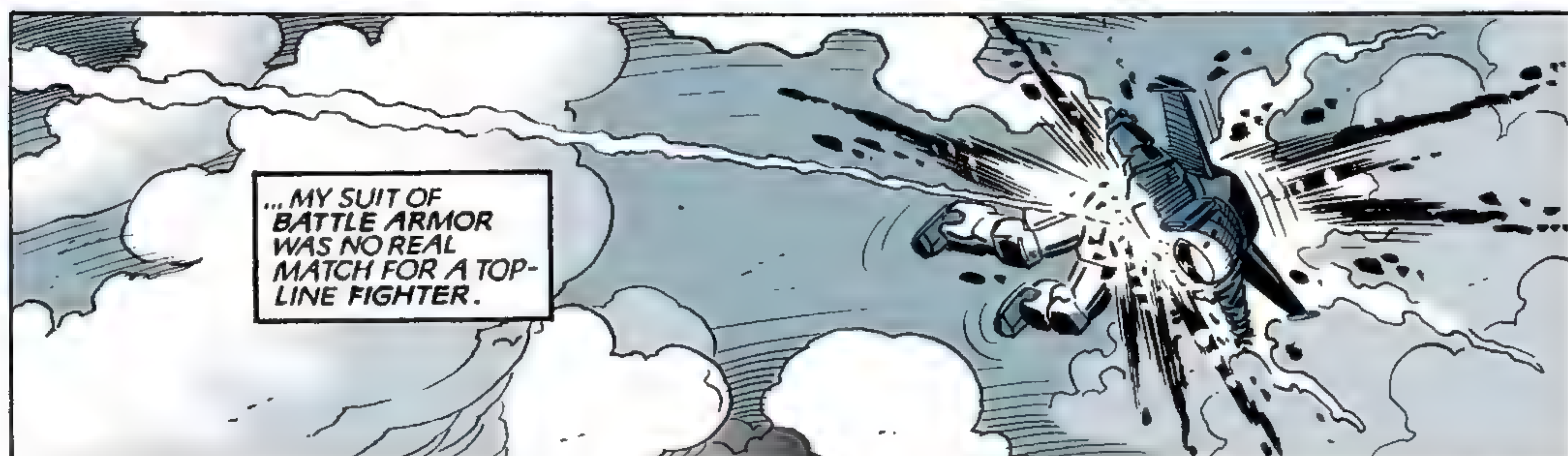
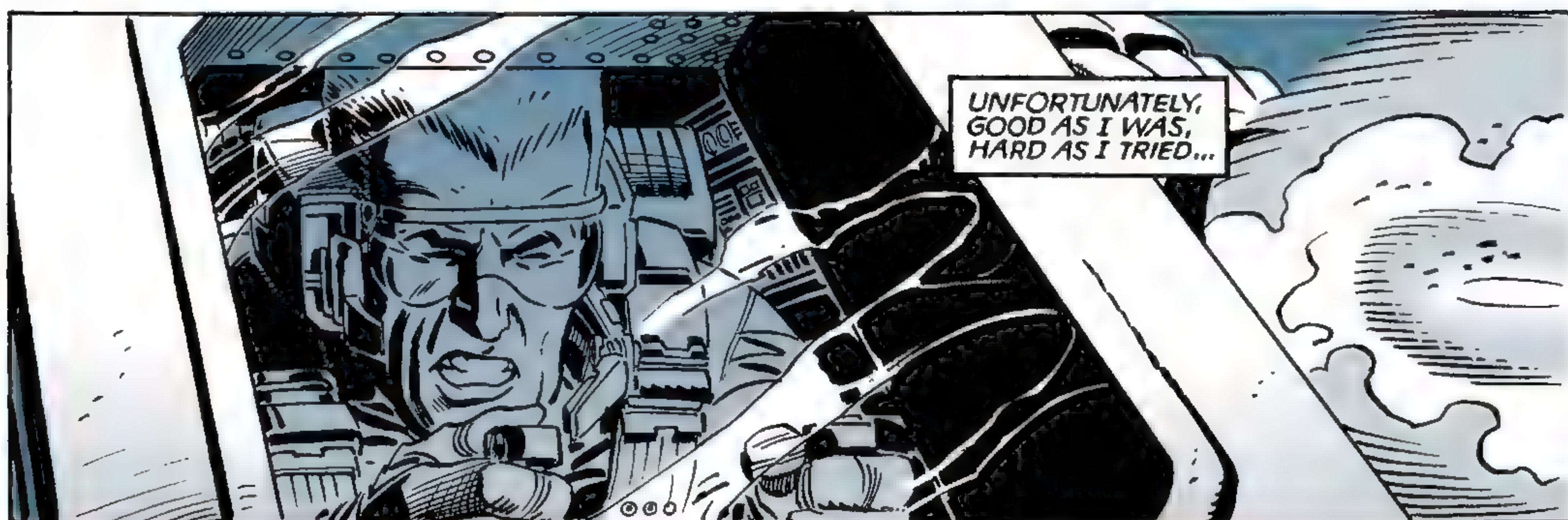
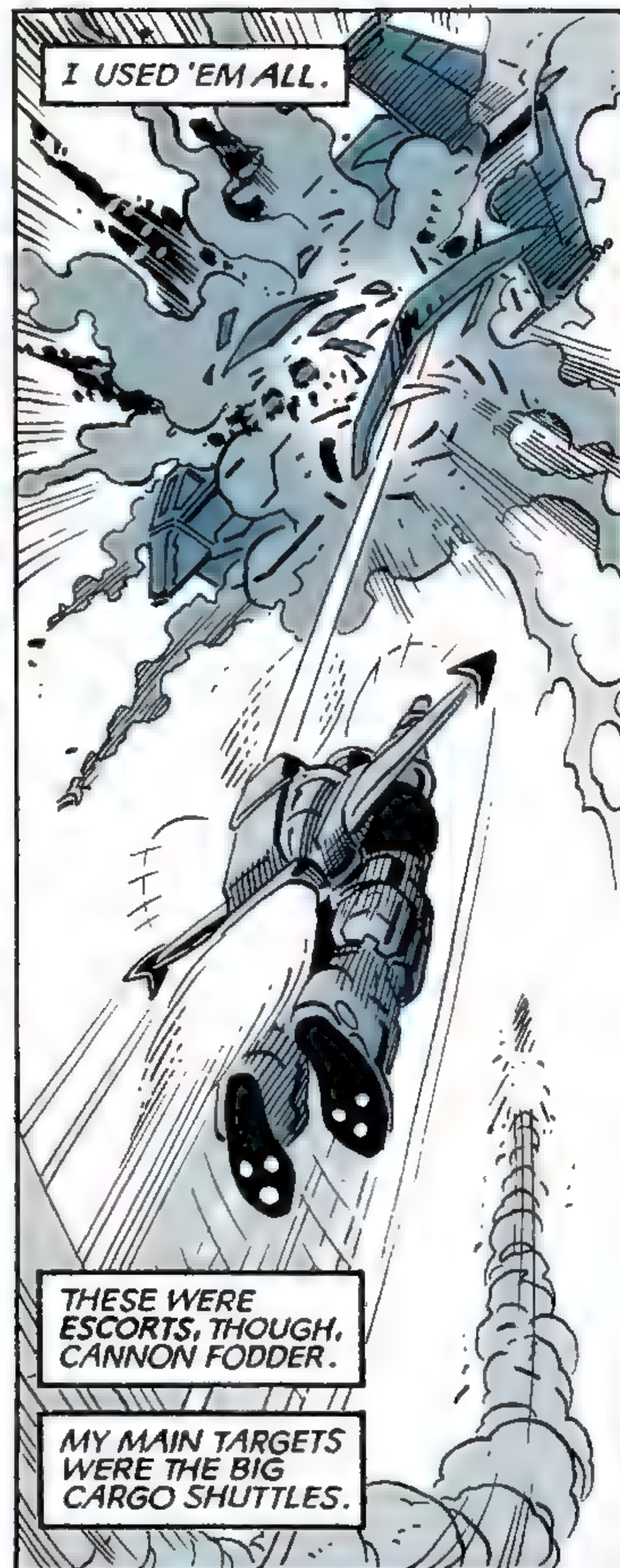
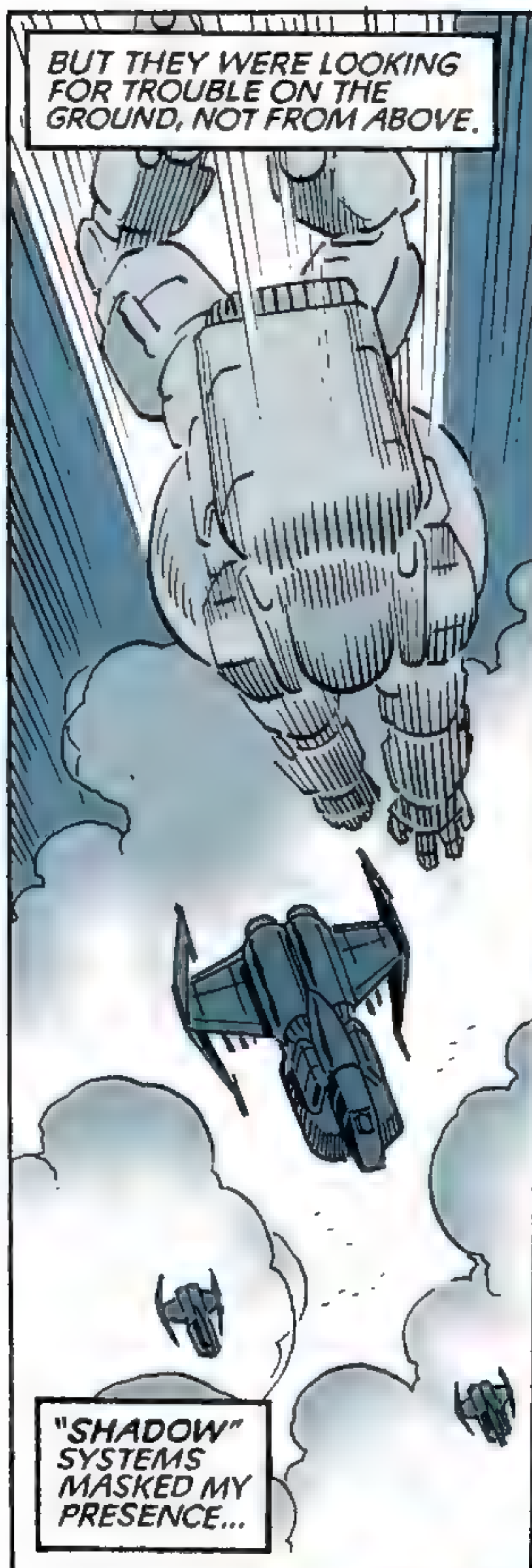
AS I "DROPPED," I REMEMBER THINKING, "THERE HAS TO BE A BETTER WAY."

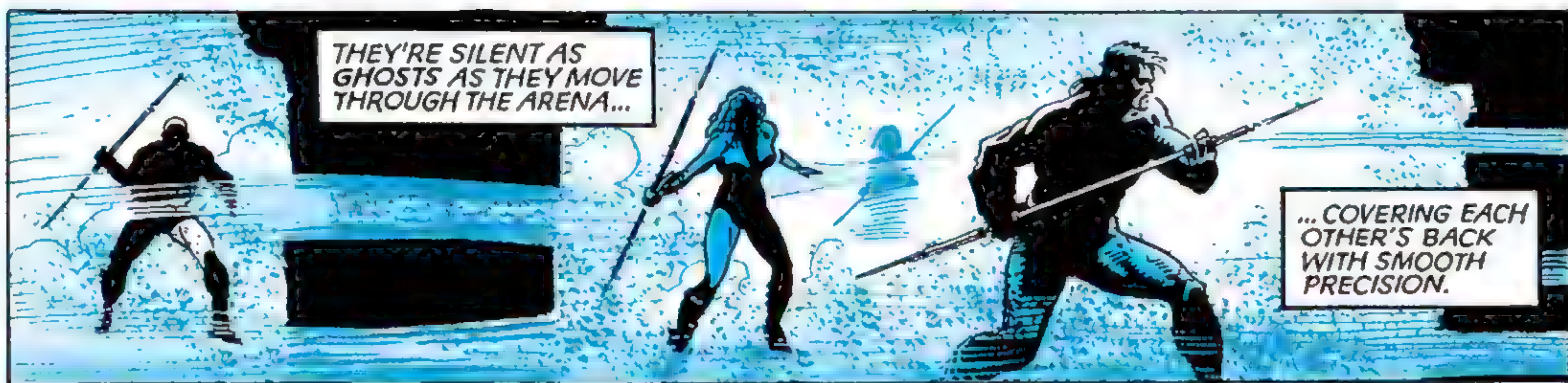


EVEN THE TOUGHEST ARMOR WON'T SURVIVE A FREE-FALL RE-ENTRY-- WHICH IS WHY I DEPLOYED A BALLUTE, BASICALLY A BIG, INFLATABLE BALLOON-BAG THAT SLOWS DESCENT...

... WHILE ABSORBING THE AWFUL HEAT OF ATMOSPHERIC FRICTION.

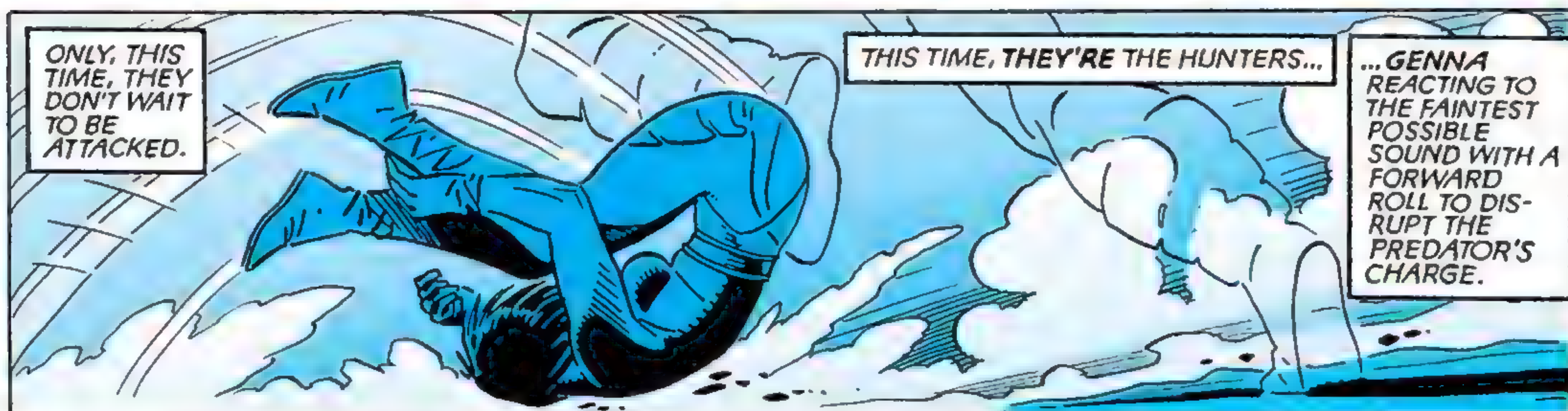
MADE A HELLUVA SIGHT, BURNING A TRAIL ACROSS THE SKY.





THEY'RE SILENT AS GHOSTS AS THEY MOVE THROUGH THE ARENA...

...COVERING EACH OTHER'S BACK WITH SMOOTH PRECISION.



ONLY, THIS TIME, THEY DON'T WAIT TO BE ATTACKED.

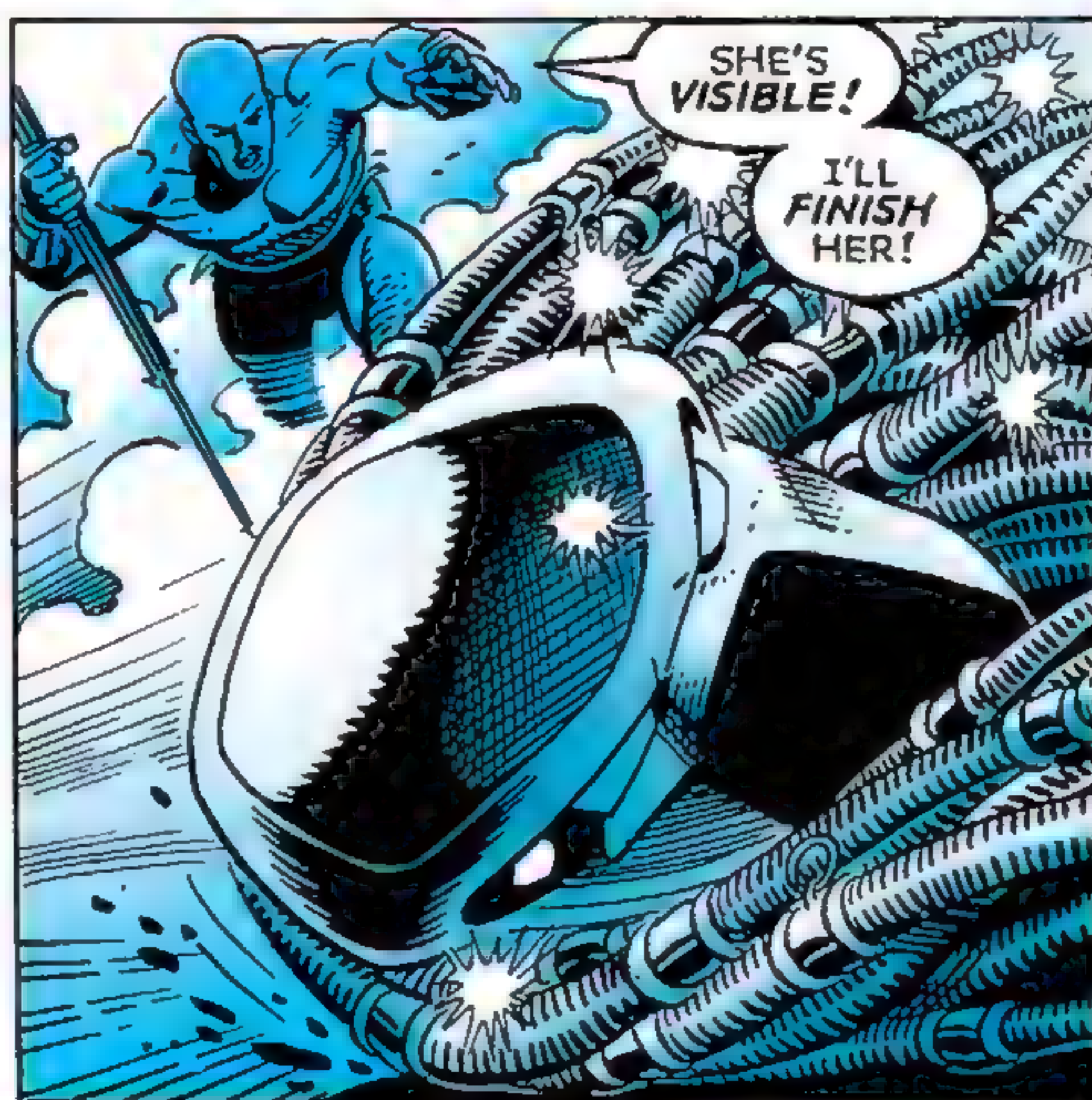
THIS TIME, THEY'RE THE HUNTERS...

...GENNA REACTING TO THE FAINTEST POSSIBLE SOUND WITH A FORWARD ROLL TO DISRUPT THE PREDATOR'S CHARGE.



IMMEDIATELY, DeMEDICI AND SHIROW FOLLOW HER LEAD...

...STRIKING WITH SUCH FORCE THAT THEY DISRUPT BIG MAMA'S CHAMELEON FIELD.



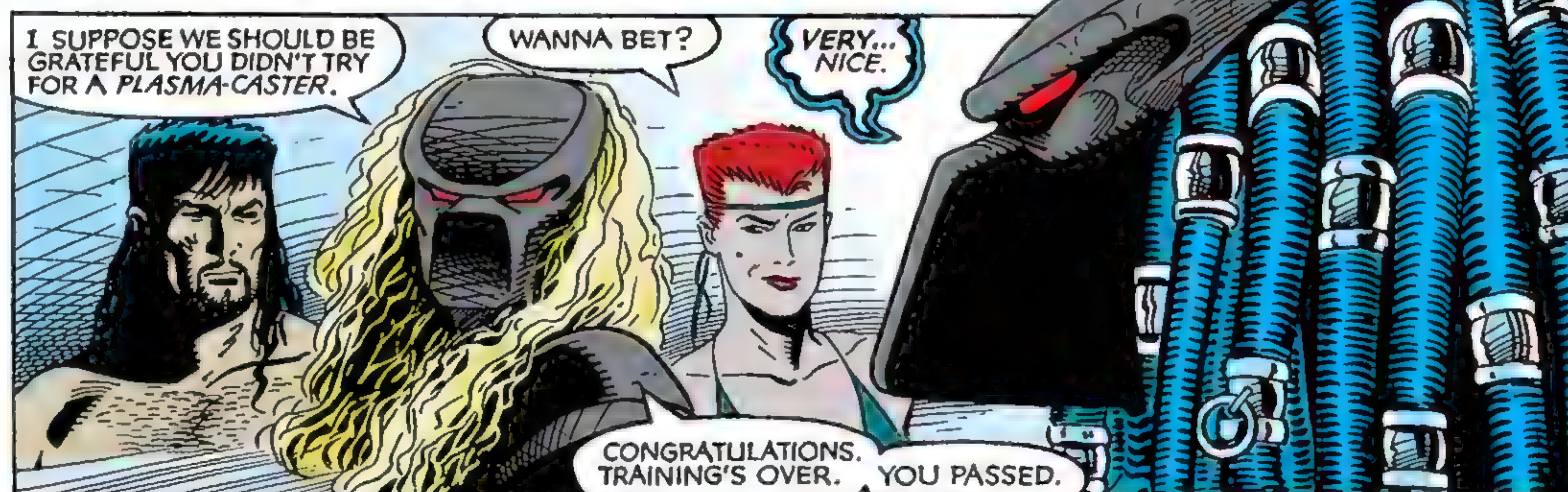
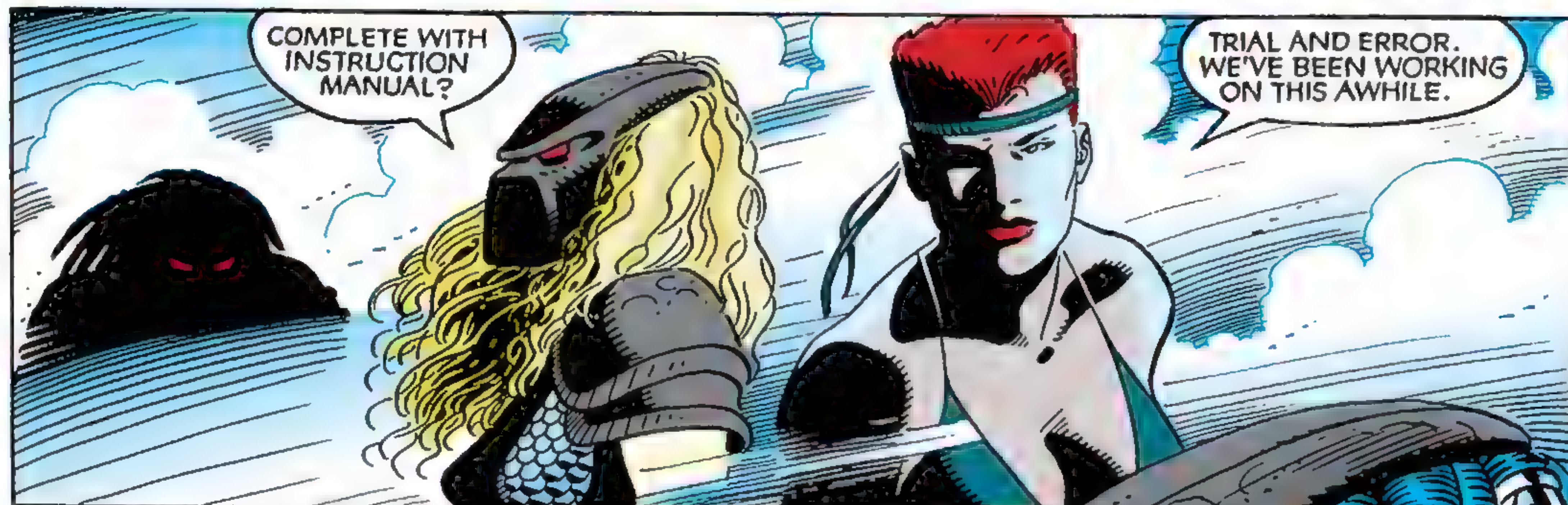
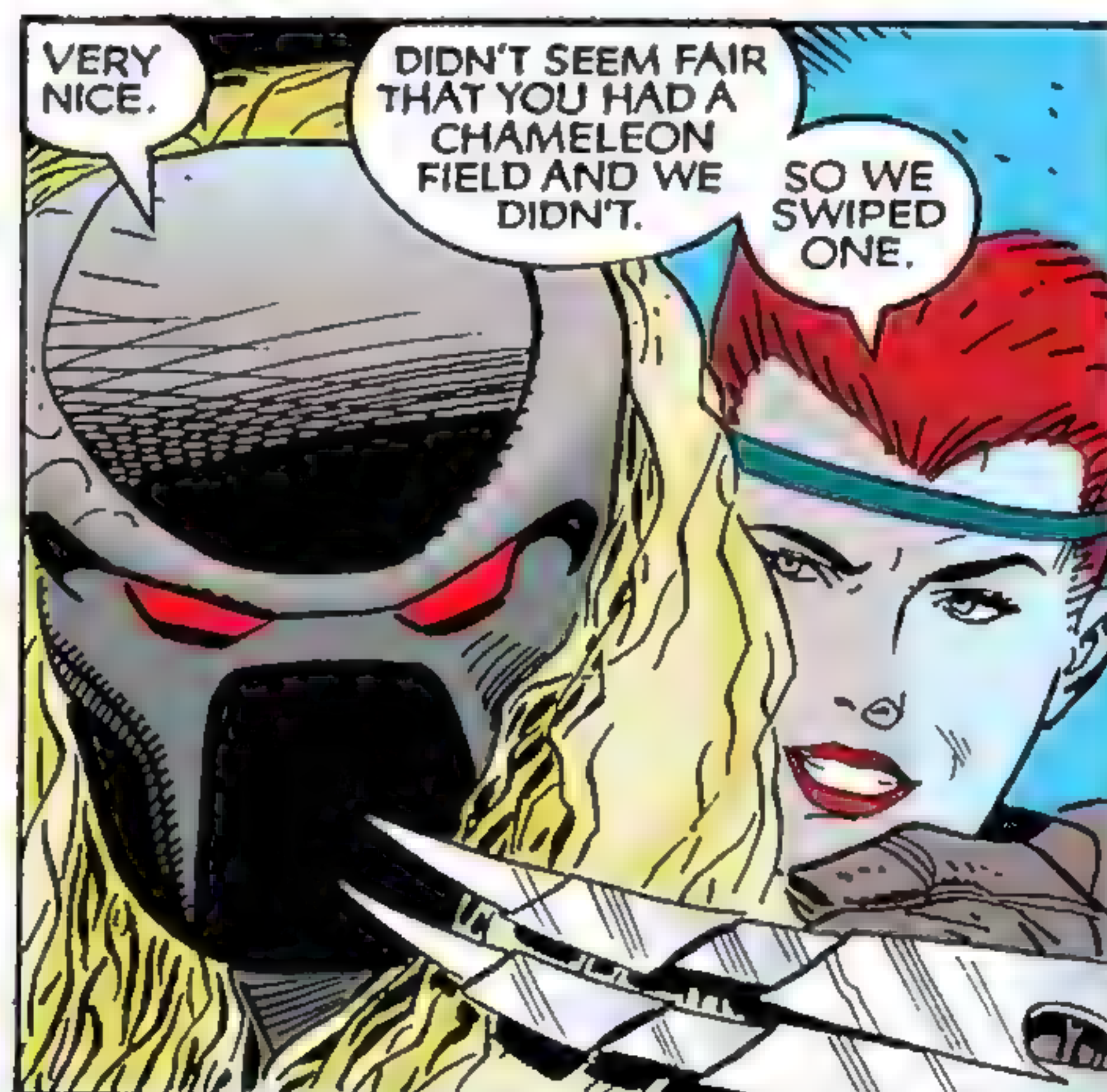
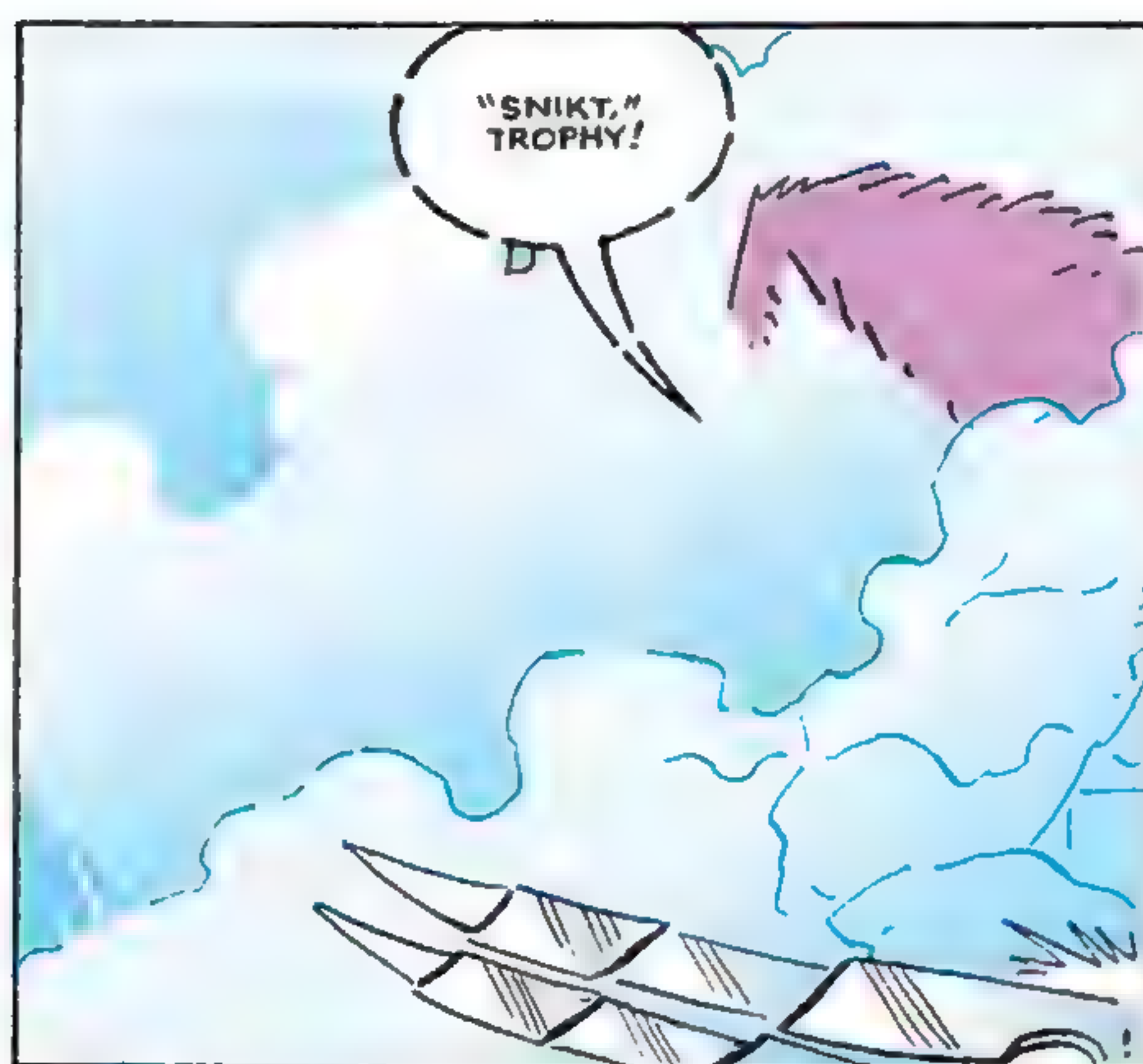
SHE'S VISIBLE!

I'LL FINISH HER!



IN YOUR... DREAMS!

KLUD!





A TAD OVER THE TOP, DON'T YOU THINK, DEAR BOY?

A SHADE TOO BARBARIC AND GRAND GUIGNOL?

YOU READ THE REPORTS, DeMATIER. WHATEVER THESE CRITTERS ARE, THIS ISN'T HOME.

NO SIGN OF ANY VEHICLE, SO THEY'RE EITHER SHIPWRECKED AND STRANDED, OR EXPECTING SOMEONE FROM OFFWORLD. IF IT'S THE LATTER, I WANT TO PUT THE FEAR OF GOD INTO 'EM.



HOW LOVELY FOR THE ALMIGHTY, STEPHAN, BUT THAT MIGHT LEAVE THEM A TAD PEEVED WITH US.

THAT'S WHY I'M LEAVING THEM SOMETHING ELSE TO REMEMBER US BY.

A FOCUS, LET'S SAY, FOR ANY THOUGHTS OF REVENGE.



HAD A SHOT AT THE STARS, BABE.



YOU CHOSE THE MUD.

YOU'VE ONLY YOURSELF TO BLAME.



DIDN'T SCREAM WHEN HE SPIKED ME TO THAT CROSS.

DAMNED IF I'D
GIVE HIM THE
SATISFACTION.

WHEN SHE FOUND ME, BIG MAMA WAS
READY TO SKIN ME ALIVE--ON THAT,
MADRIGAL WAS RIGHT ON THE MONEY.

HE JUST DIDN'T
RECKON ON HER
DETERMINATION.

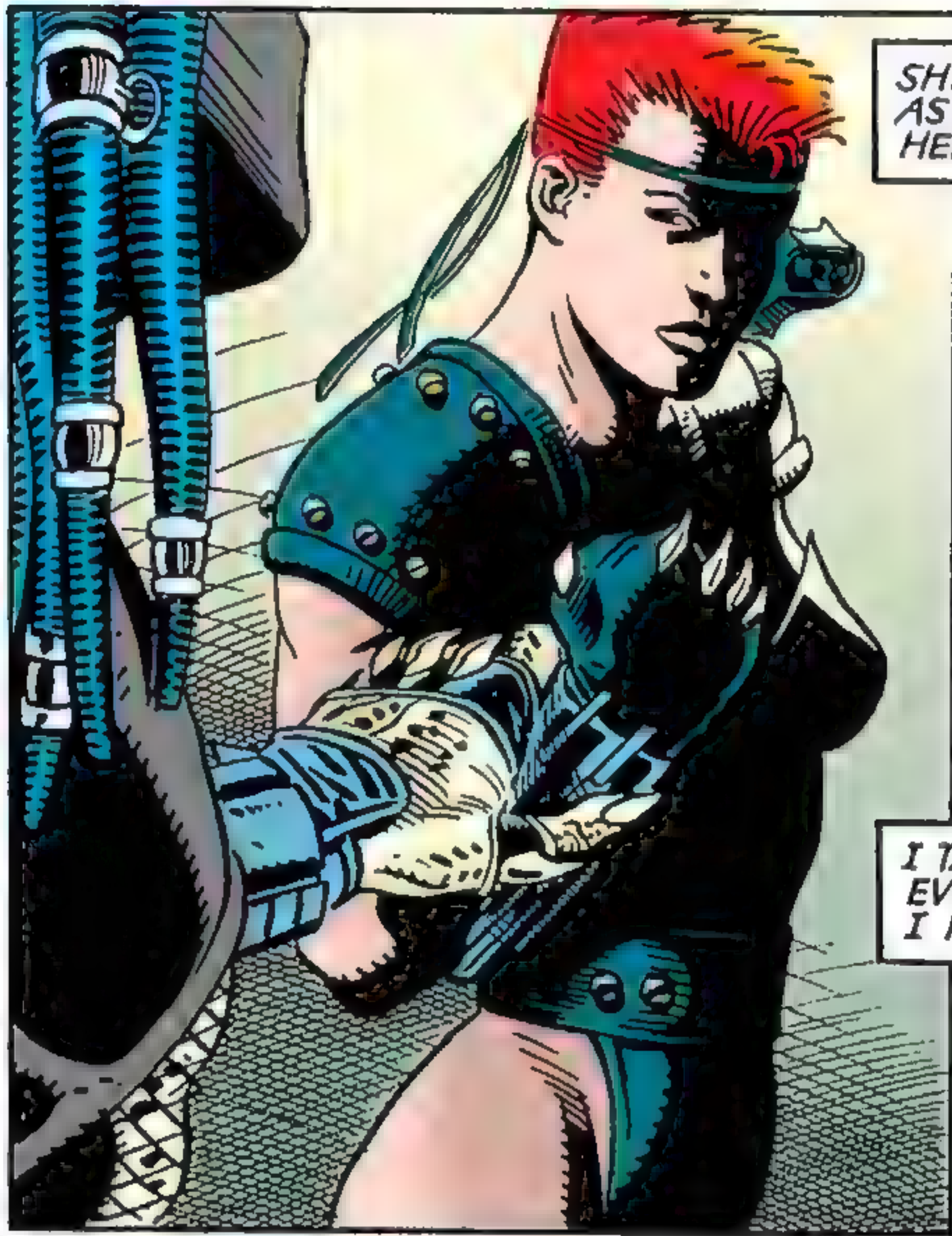
HER CHILDREN
HAD BEEN
KIDNAPPED.

I WAS THEIR
ONLY REAL
HOPE OF
RESCUE.

I STARTED AS HER
PRISONER.

OVER TIME,
I EARNED HER
RESPECT.

ULTIMATELY, HER
FRIENDSHIP.



SHE TRAINED ME
AS SHE WOULD
HER OWN.



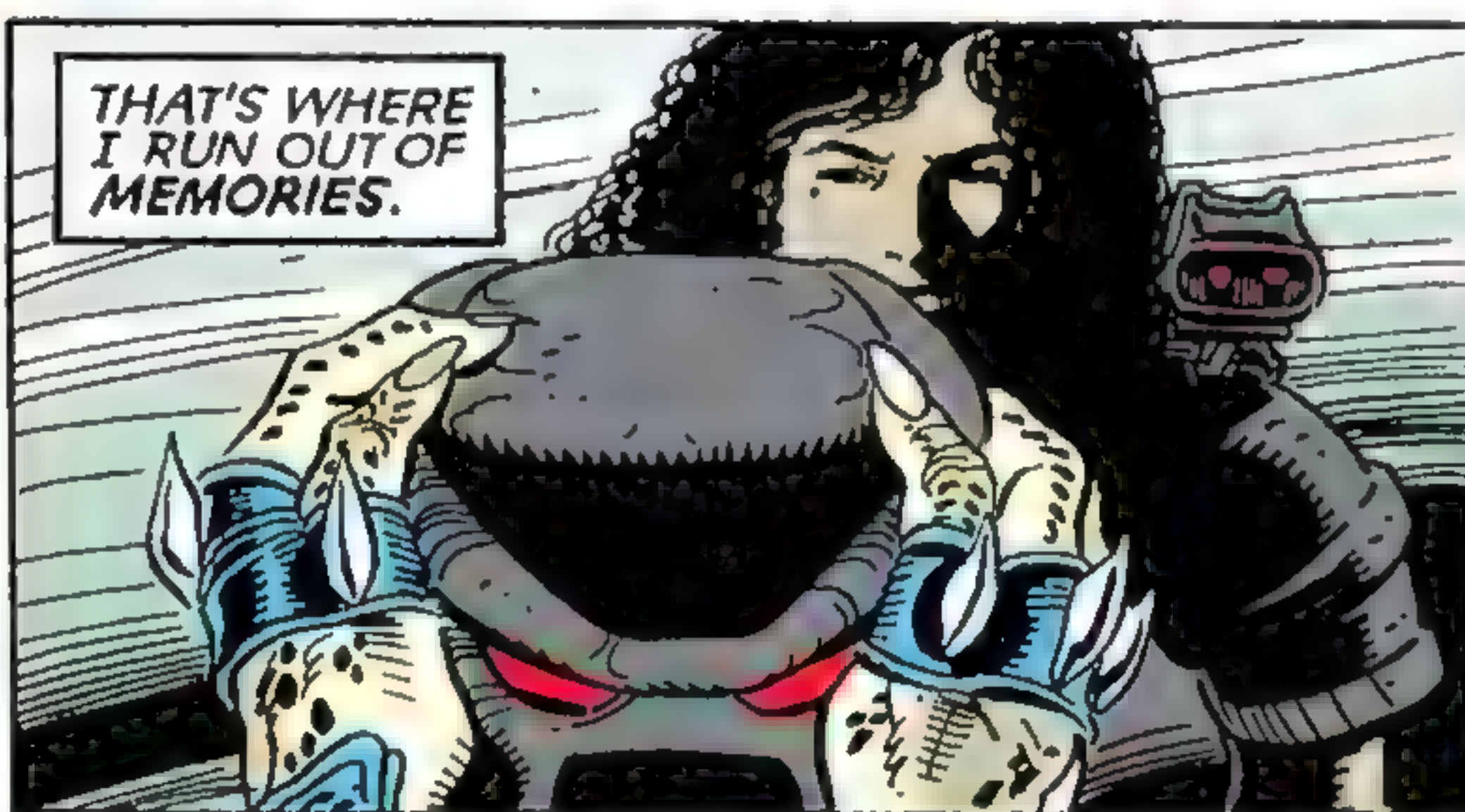
I TAUGHT HER
EVERYTHING
I KNEW.



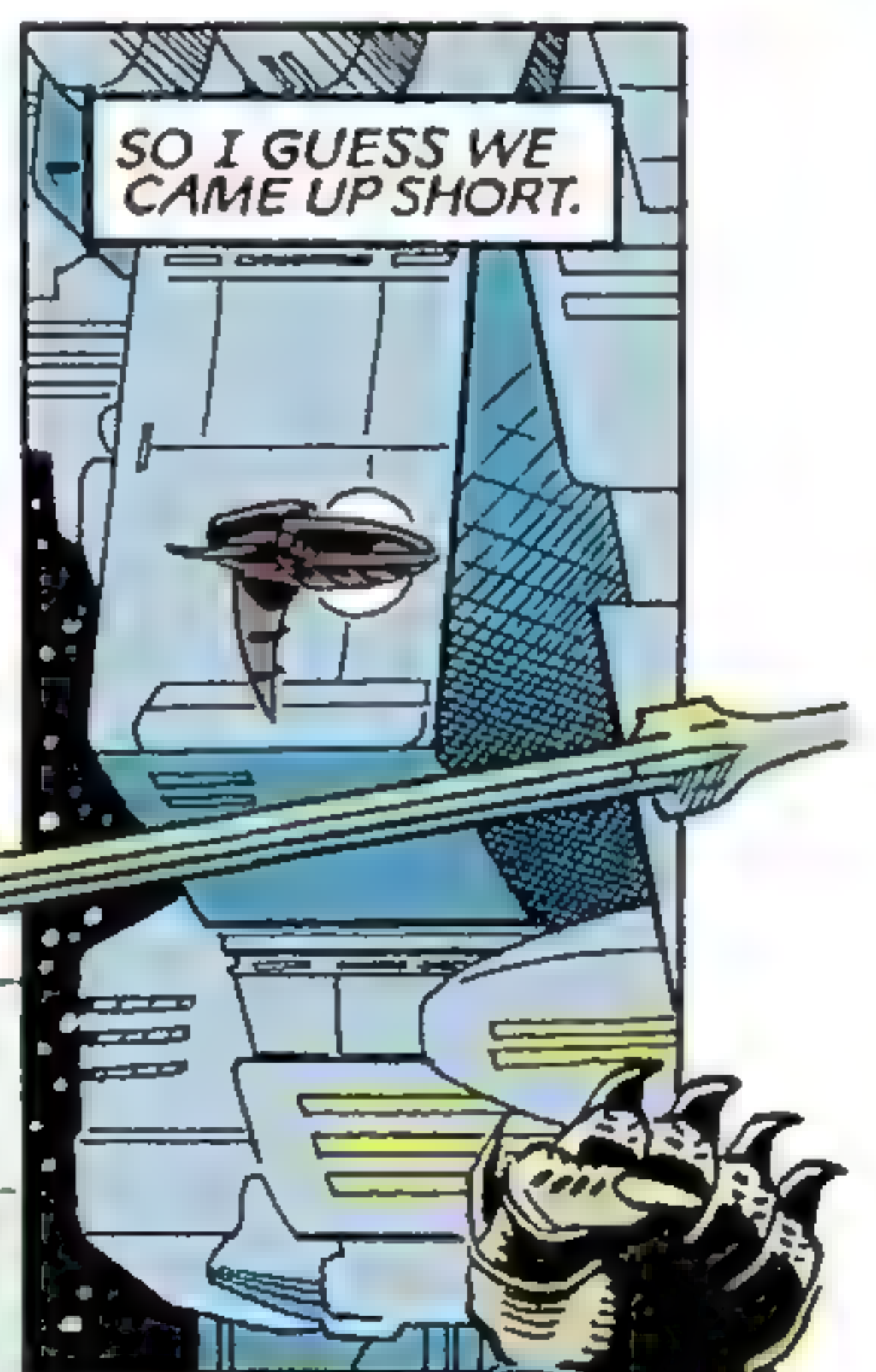
WE WERE BOTH
ALREADY MAD.



OUR GOAL WAS
TO GET EVEN.



THAT'S WHERE
I RUN OUT OF
MEMORIES.



SO I GUESS WE
CAME UP SHORT.



NICE OF THE FATES TO GIVE
US A SECOND CHANCE.

BUT NOW THAT I REALLY
THINK ABOUT IT, IT'S NOT
AS IF THEY HAD MUCH
OF A CHOICE.

LUCIEN DELACROIX RUNS
MONTCALM-DELACROIX.
WILLEM IS HIS SON.

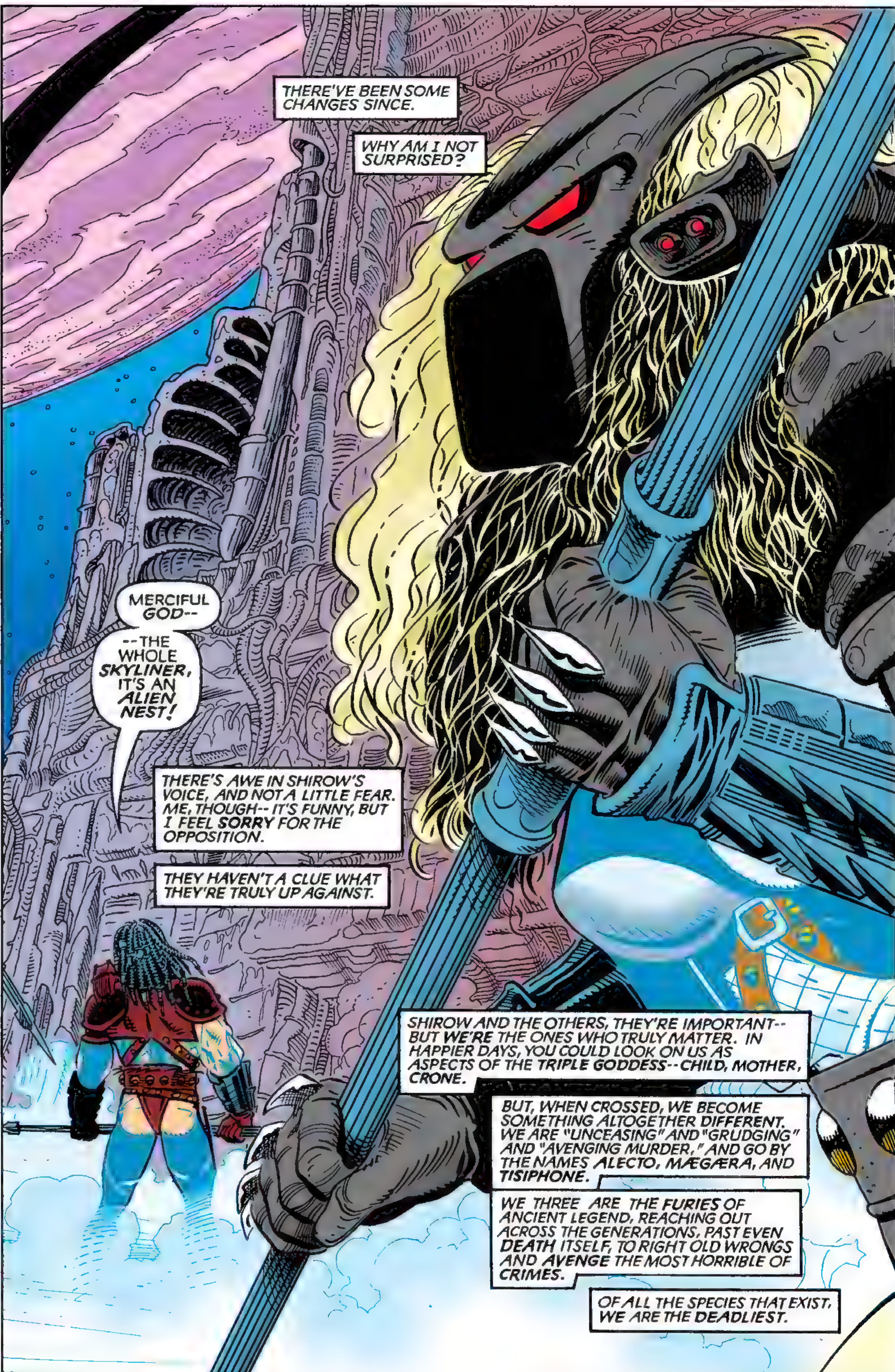
I WAS LUCIEN'S TROPHY WIFE. GISANDE
WORKED FOR HIM. SADIQ AND GENNA WERE
EMPLOYED BY THE CRIMINAL NETWORK ESTABLISHED
BY WILLEM. ACCORDING TO GISANDE,
BOBBY DeMATIER WAS HIS PARTNER.

BIG MAMA HUNTED
ME. SHIROW AND
MARIA HUNTED
HER.

SOMEHOW, MY LIFE, AND
MAMA'S, AND THE ALIEN
MOTHER QUEEN'S ARE ALL
BOUND UP TOGETHER.

AND THE PATHWAY HAS LED
US ALL RIGHT BACK WHERE
THE STORY STARTED.





THERE'VE BEEN SOME
CHANGES SINCE.

WHY AM I NOT
SURPRISED?

MERCIFUL
GOD--

--THE
WHOLE
SKYLINER,
IT'S AN
ALIEN
NEST!

THERE'S AWE IN SHIROW'S
VOICE, AND NOT A LITTLE FEAR.
ME, THOUGH-- IT'S FUNNY, BUT
I FEEL SORRY FOR THE
OPPOSITION.

THEY HAVEN'T A CLUE WHAT
THEY'RE TRULY UP AGAINST.

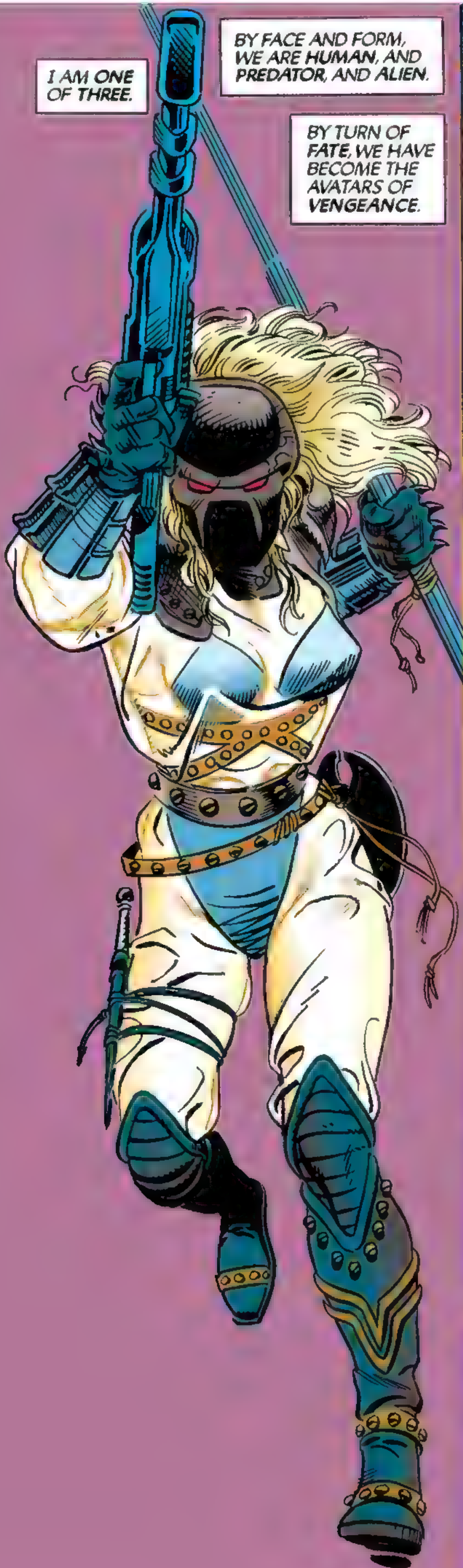
SHIROW AND THE OTHERS, THEY'RE IMPORTANT--
BUT WE'RE THE ONES WHO TRULY MATTER. IN
HAPPIER DAYS, YOU COULD LOOK ON US AS
ASPECTS OF THE TRIPLE GODDESS--CHILD, MOTHER,
CRONE.

BUT, WHEN CROSSED, WE BECOME
SOMETHING ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT.
WE ARE "UNCEASING" AND "GRUDGING"
AND "AVENGING MURDER," AND GO BY
THE NAMES ALECTO, MÆGÆRA, AND
TISIPHONE.

WE THREE ARE THE FURIES OF
ANCIENT LEGEND, REACHING OUT
ACROSS THE GENERATIONS, PAST EVEN
DEATH ITSELF, TO RIGHT OLD WRONGS
AND AVENGE THE MOST HORRIBLE OF
CRIMES.

OF ALL THE SPECIES THAT EXIST,
WE ARE THE DEADLIEST.

New BEGINNINGS



Shirow & DeMedici

WE'VE REACHED THE SKYLINER'S BRIDGE.

NO SIGN OF LIFE.

ALL SHIP SYSTEMS APPEAR ACTIVE WITHIN NOMINAL OPERATIONAL PARAMETERS.

THIS BUCKET'S ON AUTO-PILOT, SHIROW.

Gisande Salazar

I'M IN WILLEM DELACROIX'S QUARTERS.

NO SIGN OF LIFE HERE, EITHER.

Genna & Sadiq

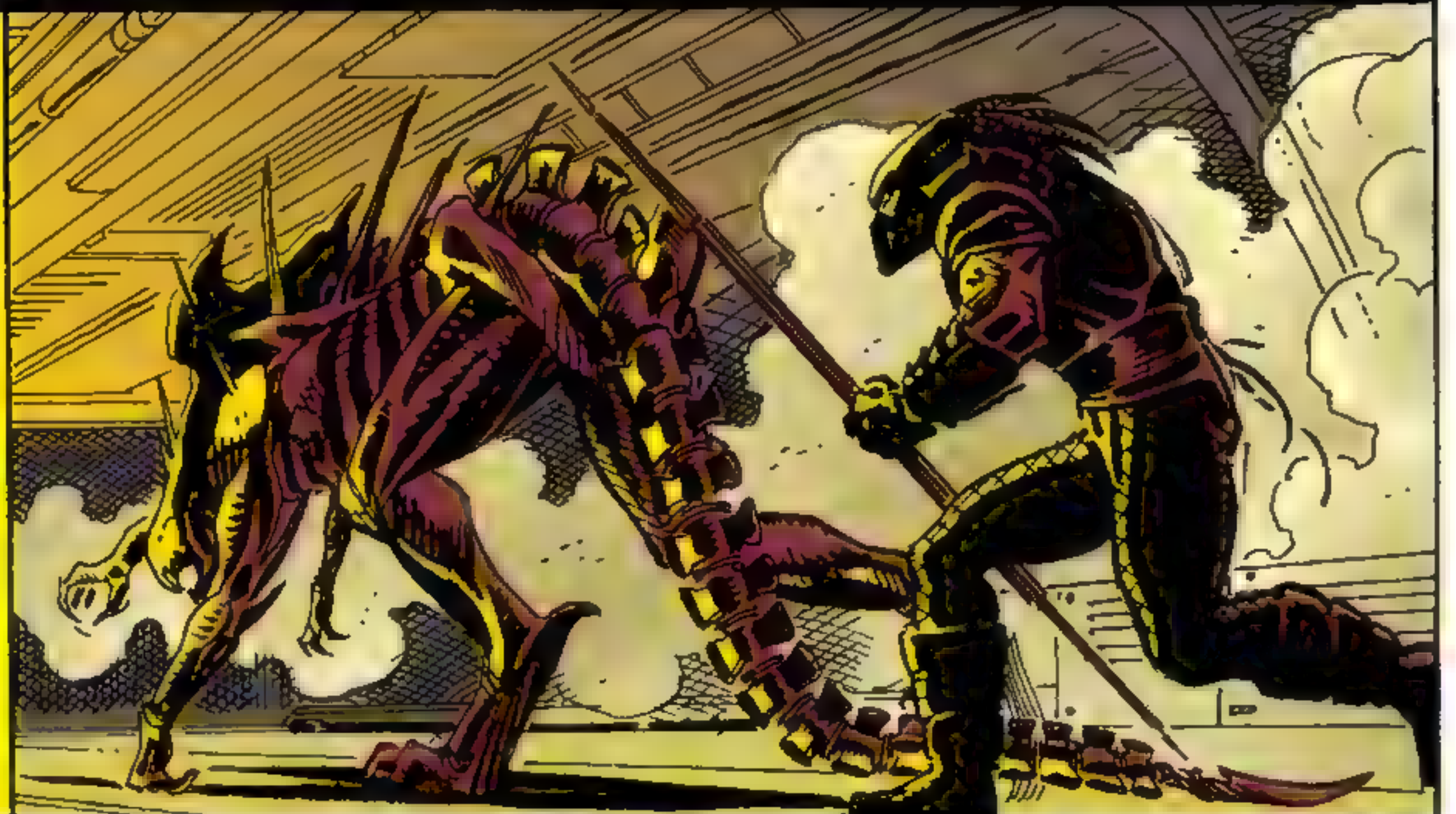
SADIQ, I'VE FOUND THE SEIGNEUR!

LUCIEN DELACROIX?

IS HE ALIVE, GENNA?

I'M ... NOT SURE.

Big Mama



WE ARE "UNCEASING,"
AND "GRUDGING," AND
"AVENGING MURDER"...

... AND ARE
CALLED BY
THE NAMES
ALECTO,
MAEGAERA,
AND
TISIPHONE.

WE GOT
TROUBLE,
TOMMY.

NOW
THERE'S A
REVELA-
TION.

BRIDGE SYSTEMS ARE COMPLETELY
ISOLATED. THE CONTROLS ARE LOCKED
TIGHT. I CAN'T ACCESS ANY MAINLINE
COMPUTER NETS, AND THE LOCAL MEMORY
CORES HAVE BEEN PURGED DRY.

I HAVE WORSE
NEWS. THIS RESIN'S
MAJORLY INHIBITING
OUR SCANNERS,
BOTH HUMAN AND
PREDATOR.

IT'S GETTING
INCREASINGLY
HARDER TO TRACK
OURSELVES,
MUCH LESS ANY
OPPOSITION.

POOR
BUNNY.

SO MUCH
FOR DREAMS
OF GLORY,
EH, WILLEM?

COULDN'T BEAR TO
STAND ANYMORE IN YOUR
PAPA'S SHADOW, SO YOU
TEAMED UP WITH BOBBY
DEMATIER...

... TO SHOVE
THE OLD MAN
OUT OF THE
WAY.

I WARNED YOU
THAT MADMAN
HAD AN AGENDA
ALL HIS OWN.

BUT I
GUESS YOU
ALREADY
KNOW
THAT.

I'M NOT SO GULLIBLE
AS MY FORMER EM-
PLOYER, BOBBY!

ZARK!

AND I DON'T DIE
ANYWHERE
NEAR SO
EASILY!

THAT'S A CELLULAR SKULLTAP,
SADIQ-- THE KIND VIRTUAL
JUNKIES USE TO HARDWIRE THEM-
SELVES PERMANENTLY INTO A MAIN-
FRAME NET.

MAYBE THE SEIGNEUR FIGURED
THAT WHATEVER HAPPENED TO HIS
BODY, AT LEAST HIS BRAIN COULD
ESCAPE INTO THE MACHINE.

MAYBE.

BUT I
NEVER
FIGURED
SOMEONE
LIKE
LUCIEN
DELA-
CROIX
FOR A
QUITTER--

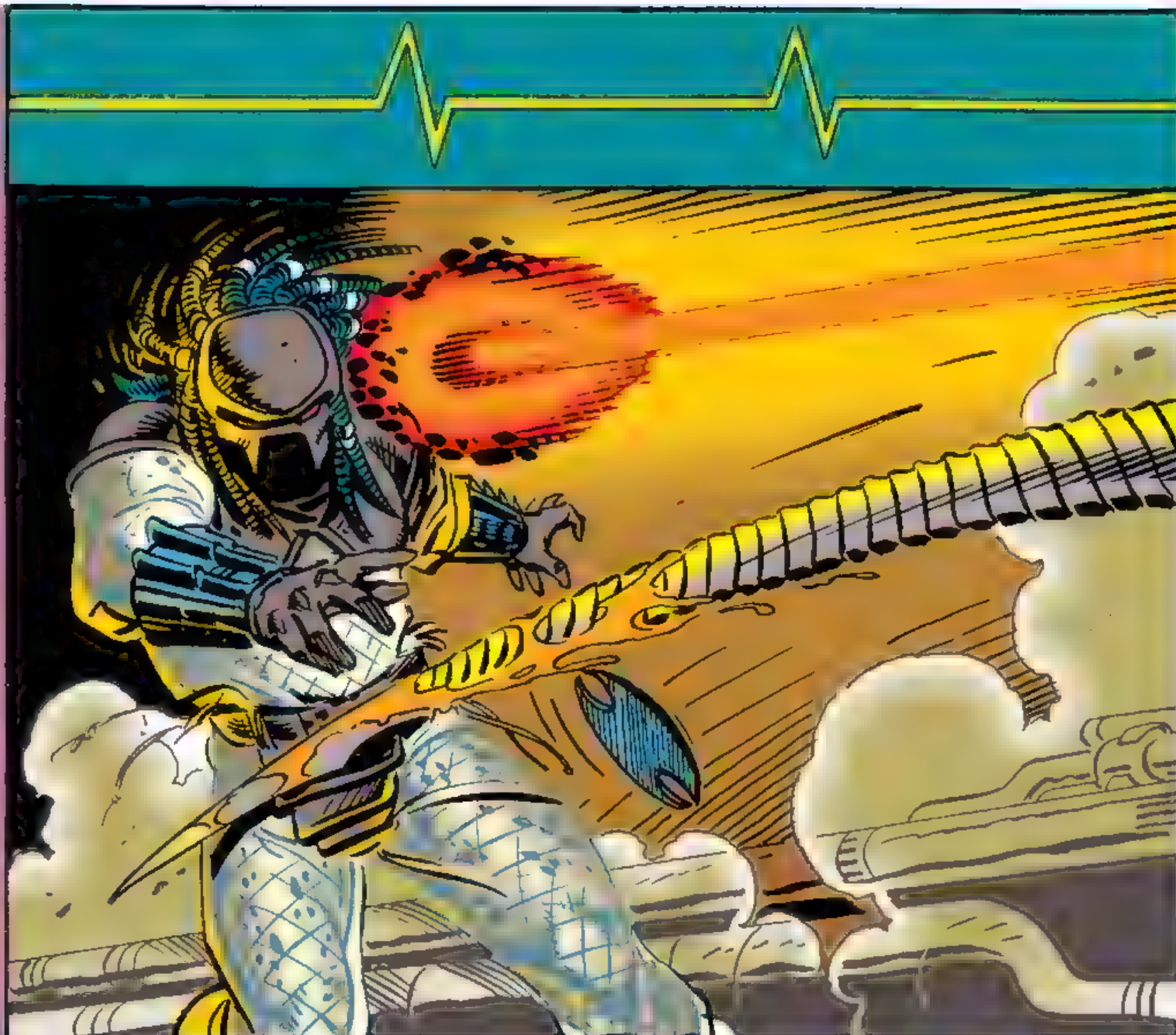
--HOSTILES!

ALL STATIONS
ALERT!

WE'RE UNDER
ATTACK!

WE
THREE
ARE THE
FURIES OF
ANCIENT
LEGEND...

... REACHING
OUT ACROSS
THE GENERA-
TIONS, PAST EVEN
DEATH ITSELF...



... TO
RIGHT OLD
WRONGS,
AND AVENGE
THE MOST
HORRIBLE
OF CRIMES.

OF ALL THE
SPECIES THAT
EXIST, WE
ARE THE
DEADLIEST.

I LOVE THE
FRONTIER.

WHERE SOME SEE
DESOLATION, I
REVEL IN THE VISTAS
OF INFINITE SPACE.

IT'S A REALM OF ABSOLUTES. IT
BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN A PERSON--
OR THE WORST. YOU EITHER
BELONG, OR YOU DON'T-- AND IF
YOU DON'T, YOU DIE.

THIS TOWN IS THE
FARTHEST OUTPOST
OF CIVILIZATION,
HERE TO REMIND
US OF ALL THAT'S
COME BEFORE IN
HISTORY. AND
PERHAPS STAND
AS HARBINGER OF
WHAT'S TO BE.

DON'T HAVE
MUCH USE FOR
IT, EITHER WAY.

I'M HERE
BECAUSE
I'M THE
LAW.

USED TO BE
CALLED SAMARA.

SIGNPOST SAYS
ITS NAME'S BEEN
CHANGED TO
LIBERTY.



SETTINGS CHANGE. FACES STAY PRETTY MUCH THE SAME.

IT'S TOY'S SALOON. HE PRESENTS WHAT PASSES FOR ENTERTAINMENT IN THIS COMMUNITY.

LADY AT THE BAR LOST HER KIDS A WHILE BACK, STOLEN BY THE SAME SCUM WHO MASSACRED HER FAMILY. BEEN PART OF MY JOB TO FIND 'EM.

MAJOR SHIROW AND COLONEL DEMEDICI REPRESENT THE LOCAL MILITARY.

GENNA AND SADIQ ARE THE LOCAL TOUGHS.



I AM IMPRESSED.

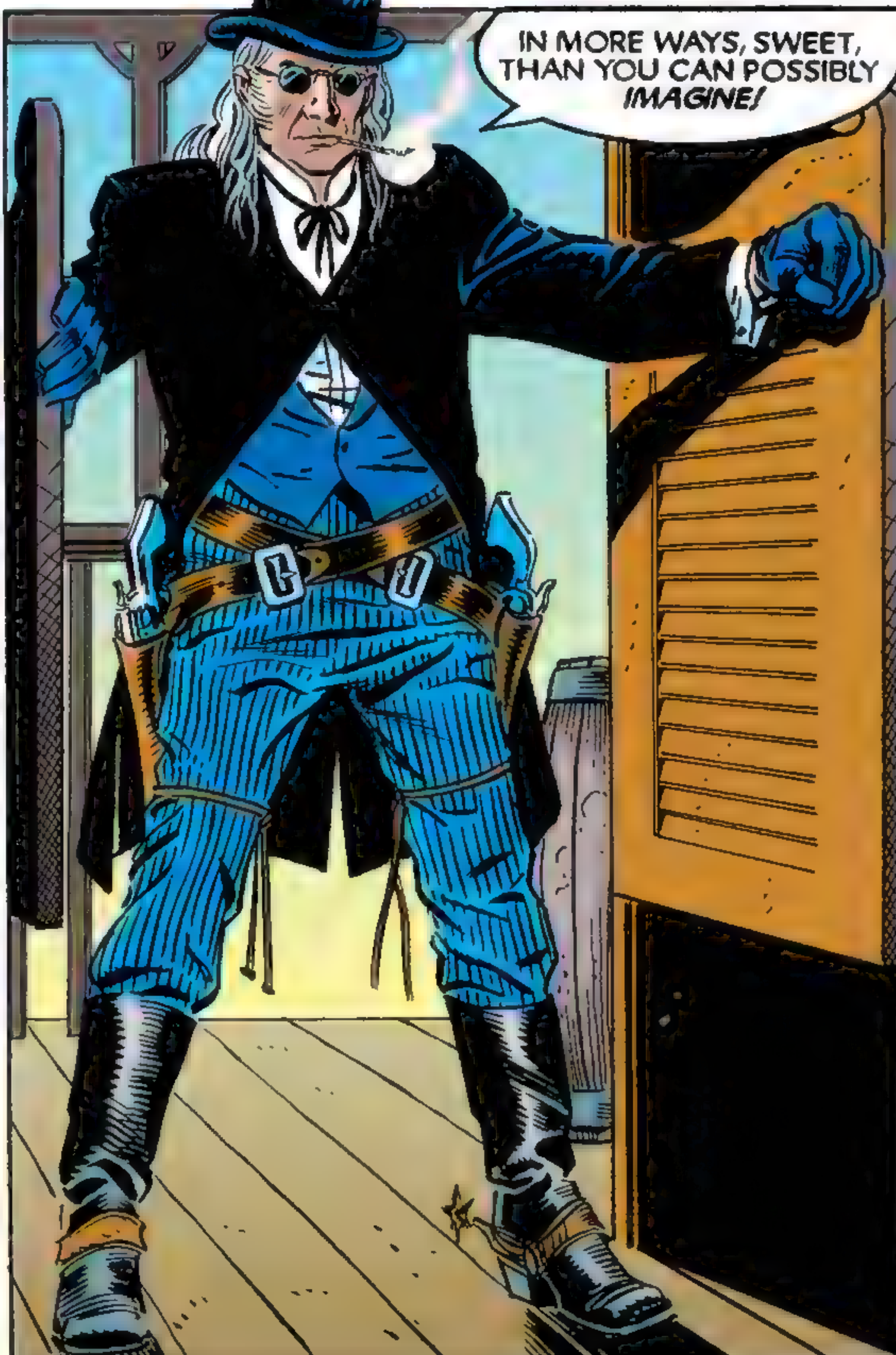
I'M GLAD.

I MEAN IT, TOY. SIGHT, SOUND, SMELL, TOUCH -- YOU'VE MANAGED A SIMULATION THAT ENGAGES ALL THE PHYSICAL SENSES, AS FULLY TEXTURED AS REALITY!

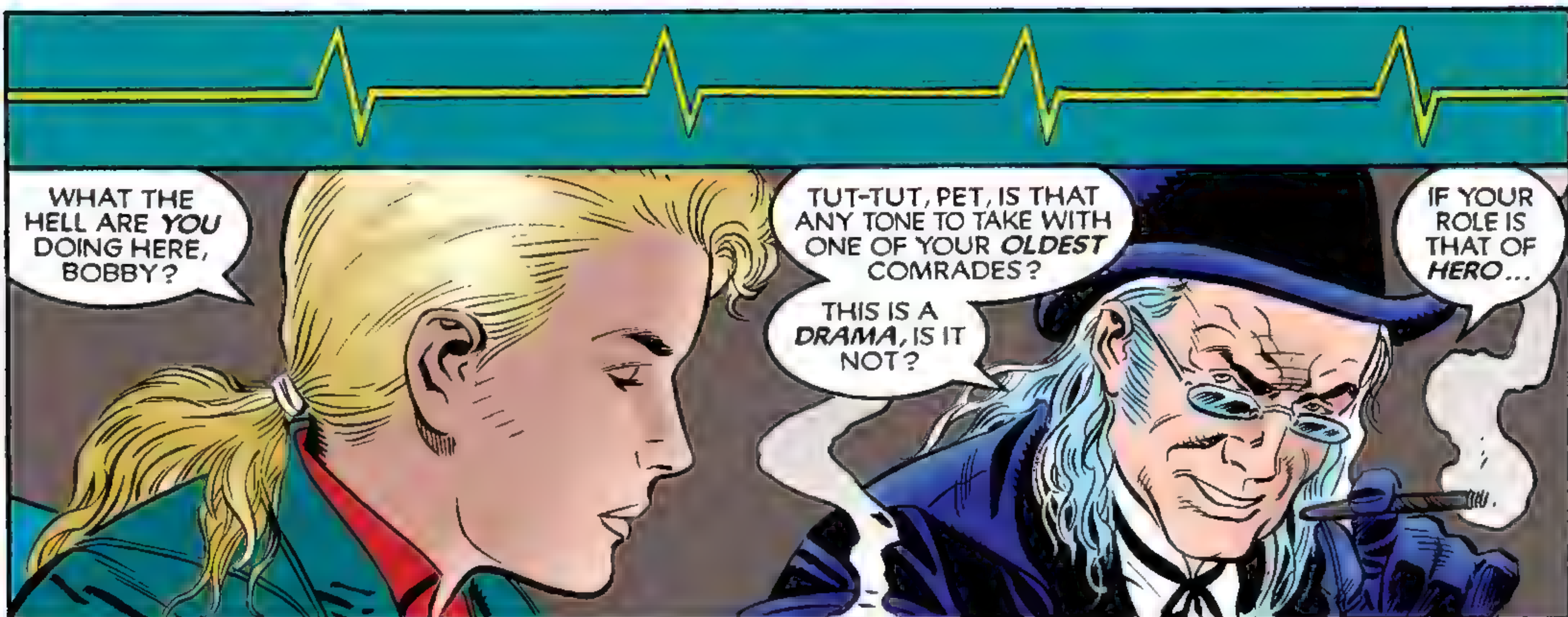
ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU DESIGNED ME FOR?

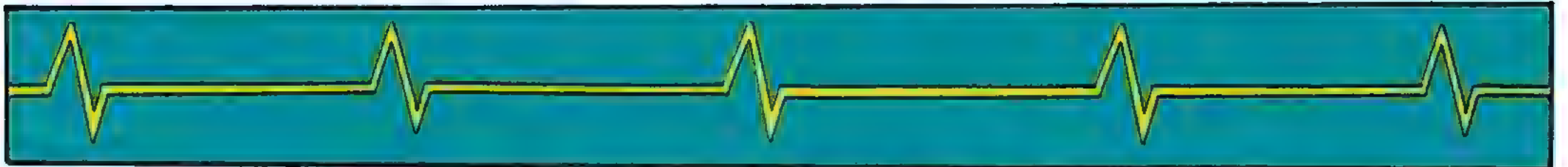
THAT'S WHERE I MAY HAVE STARTED, MY FRIEND ...

... BUT YOU'VE SURPASSED MY WILDEST EXPECTATIONS.



IN MORE WAYS, SWEET, THAN YOU CAN POSSIBLY IMAGINE!





A NEAT *RATIONALIZATION*-- CLAIMING TOY'S A *PERSON* ONE MOMENT AND THE PROTECTIONS OF *OWNERSHIP* THE NEXT.

YOU CAN'T HAVE IT *BOTH* WAYS.

IF HE'S *SENTIENT*, THEN GRANT HIM THE RIGHT OF *FREE CHOICE*.

LET ME MAKE *HIM* AN OFFER HE CAN'T REFUSE.

YOU WANT TOY SO MUCH, DeMATIER, GO WRITE A *PROGRAM* OF YOUR OWN.

HE'S *MY* CREATION. I'LL DECIDE WHAT TO DO WITH HIM.

DEAR HEART, CAN'T YOU SEE THE *POTENTIAL*--?!

ONLY TOO WELL. THAT'S WHY I'M *STANDING FAST*.

YOU'RE BEING *FOOLISH*.

A CROSS I'LL GLADLY BEAR.

I CONSIDER MYSELF A *MORAL* BEING. THERE ARE LINES I WILL NOT CROSS.

THERE ARE LINES THAT TOY CAN'T BE *ALLOWED* TO CROSS.

NONSENSE!

CORRUPTION'S AN INTEGRAL PART OF YOUR BEING, BOBBY, BUT IT'S HELD IN CHECK BY THE LIMITATIONS OF *MORTALITY*.

A LONE MAN, REGARDLESS OF AMBITION, CAN ONLY ACHIEVE SO MUCH, CAUSE SO MUCH *HARM*.

TOY WOULD HAVE NO SUCH *INHIBITORS*.

ABSOLUTE POTENTIAL, ABSOLUTE ABILITY, CORRUPTING *ABSOLUTELY*? WHAT A *DELICIOUS* CONCEPT!

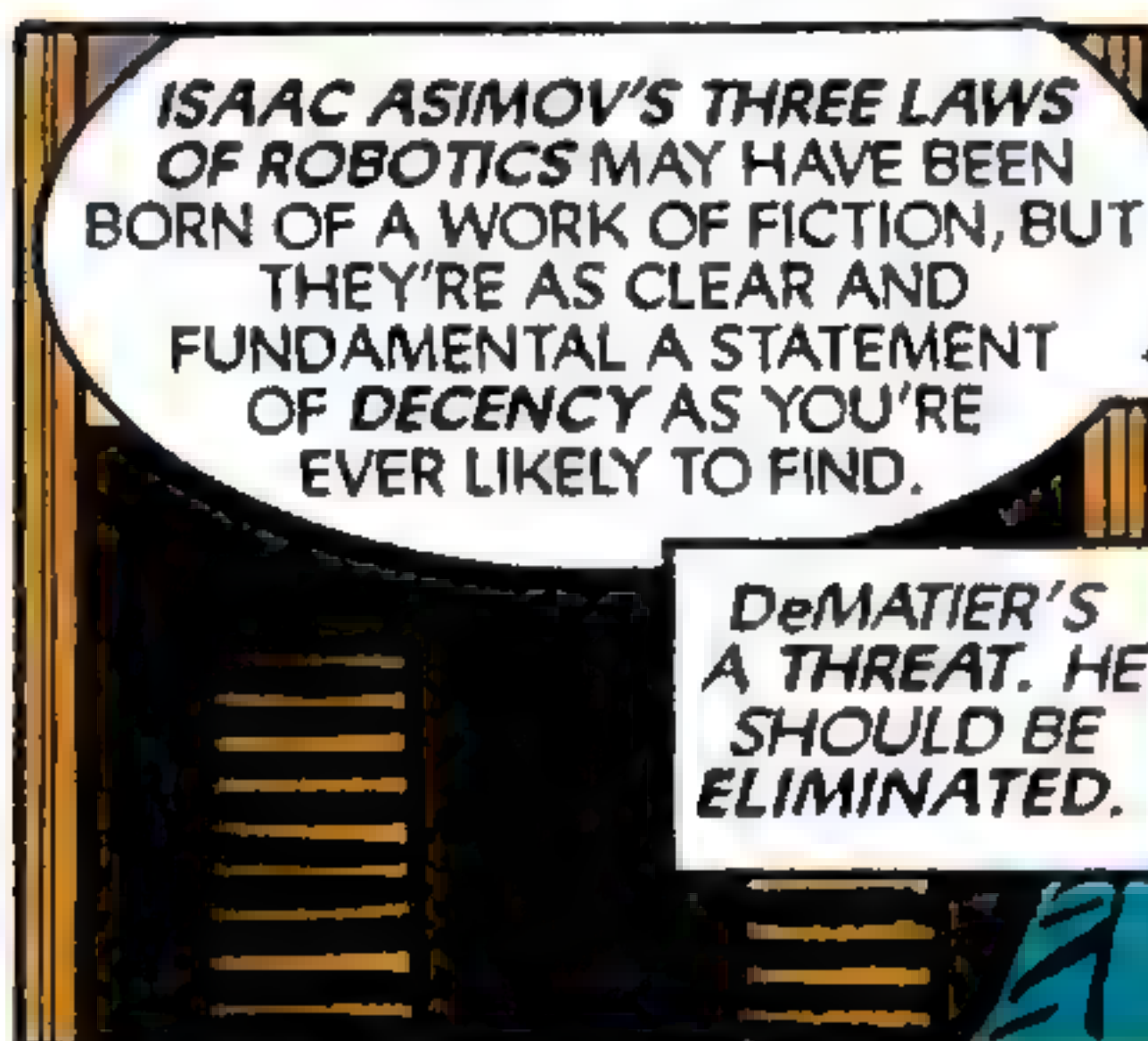
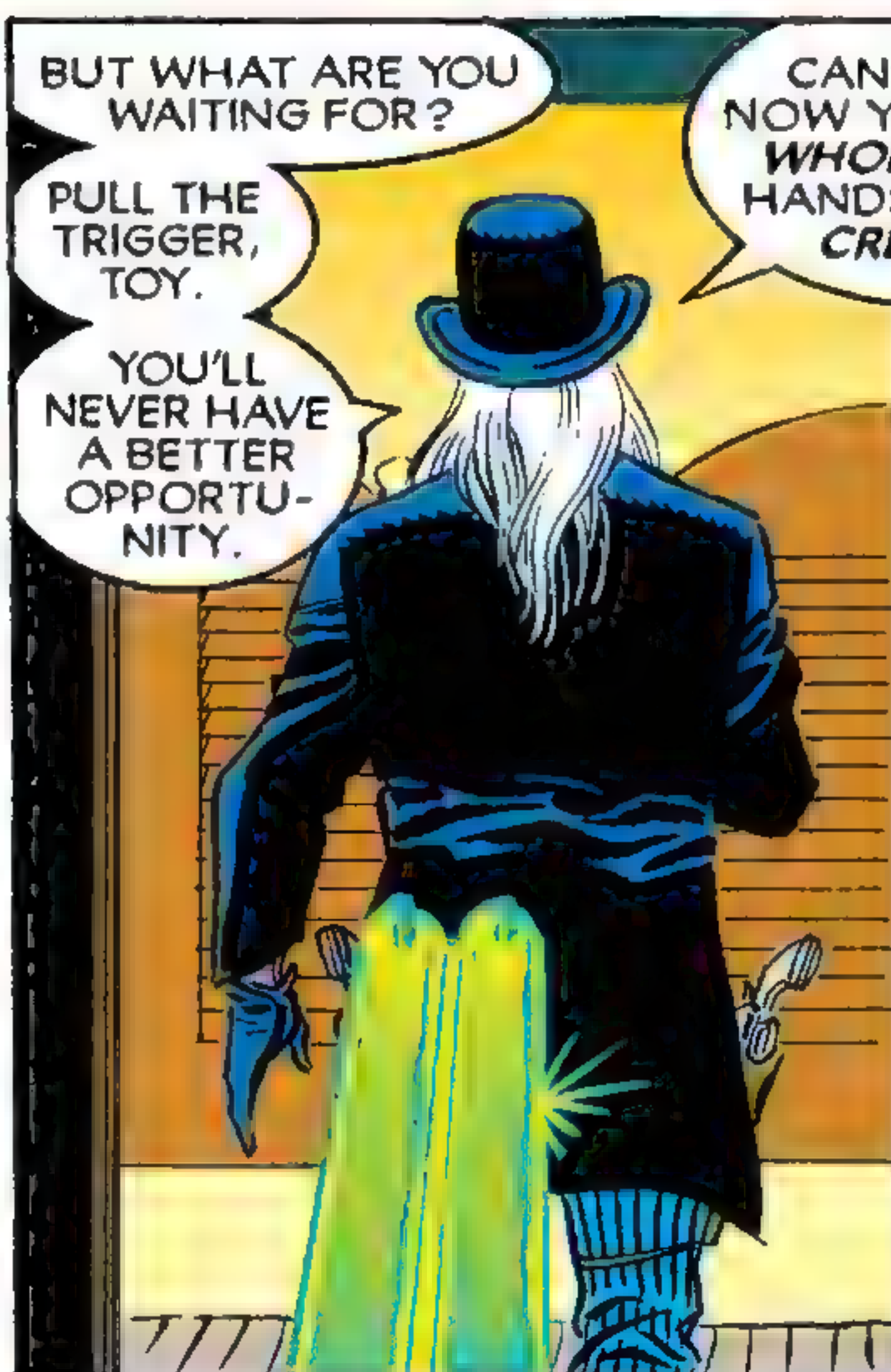
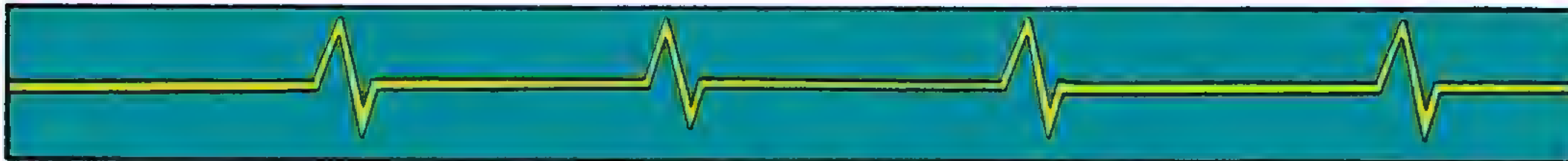
I SEE NOW THERE'S BUT *ONE* WAY TO RESOLVE OUR DISPUTE.

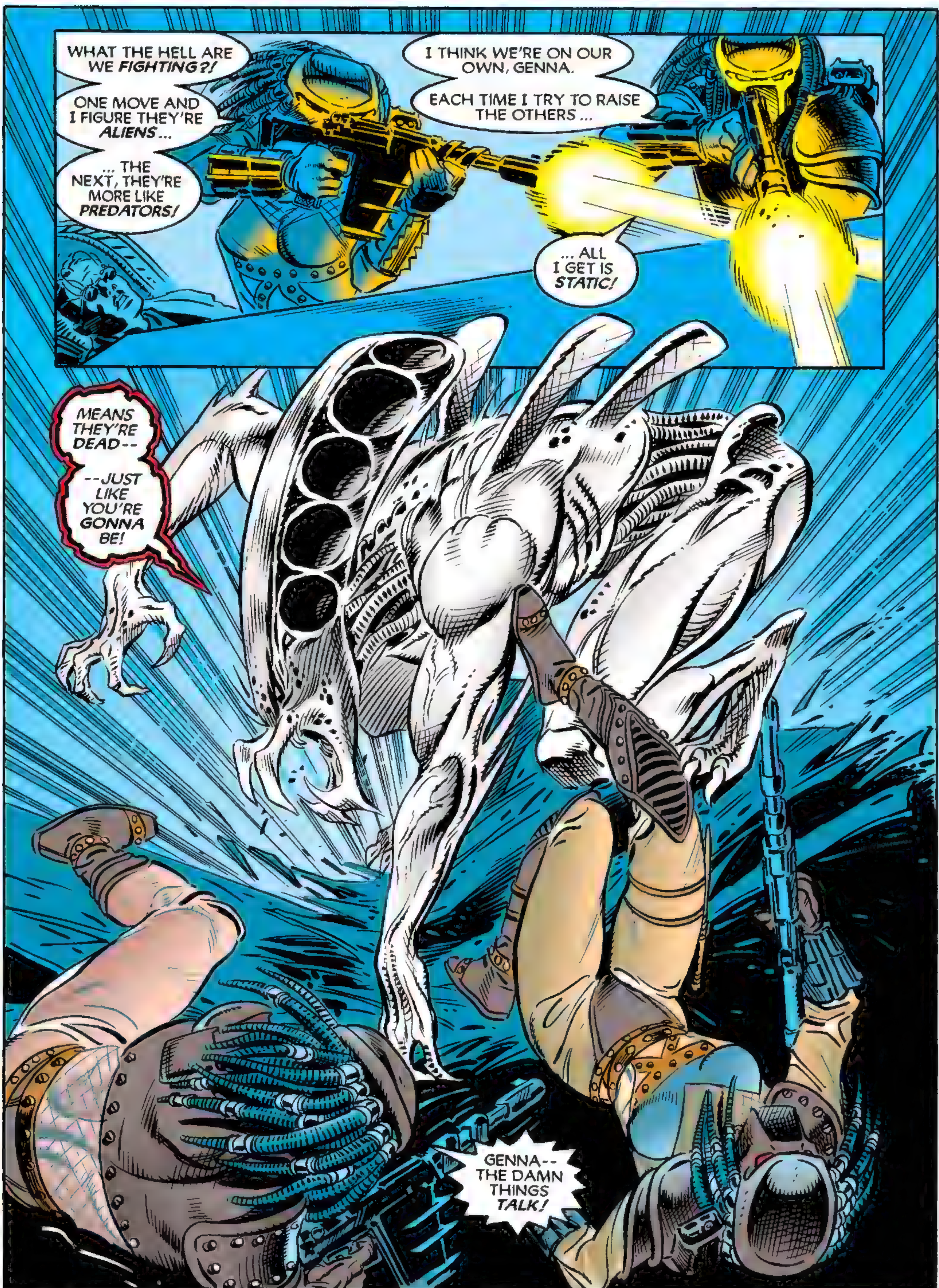
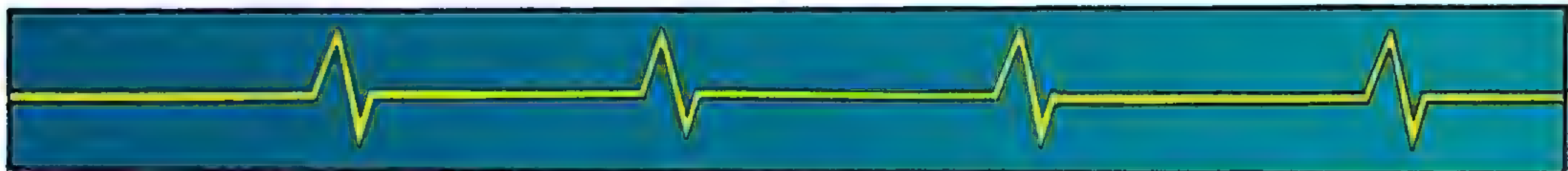
I DON'T WANT IT TO COME TO THAT, BOBBY. PLEASE!

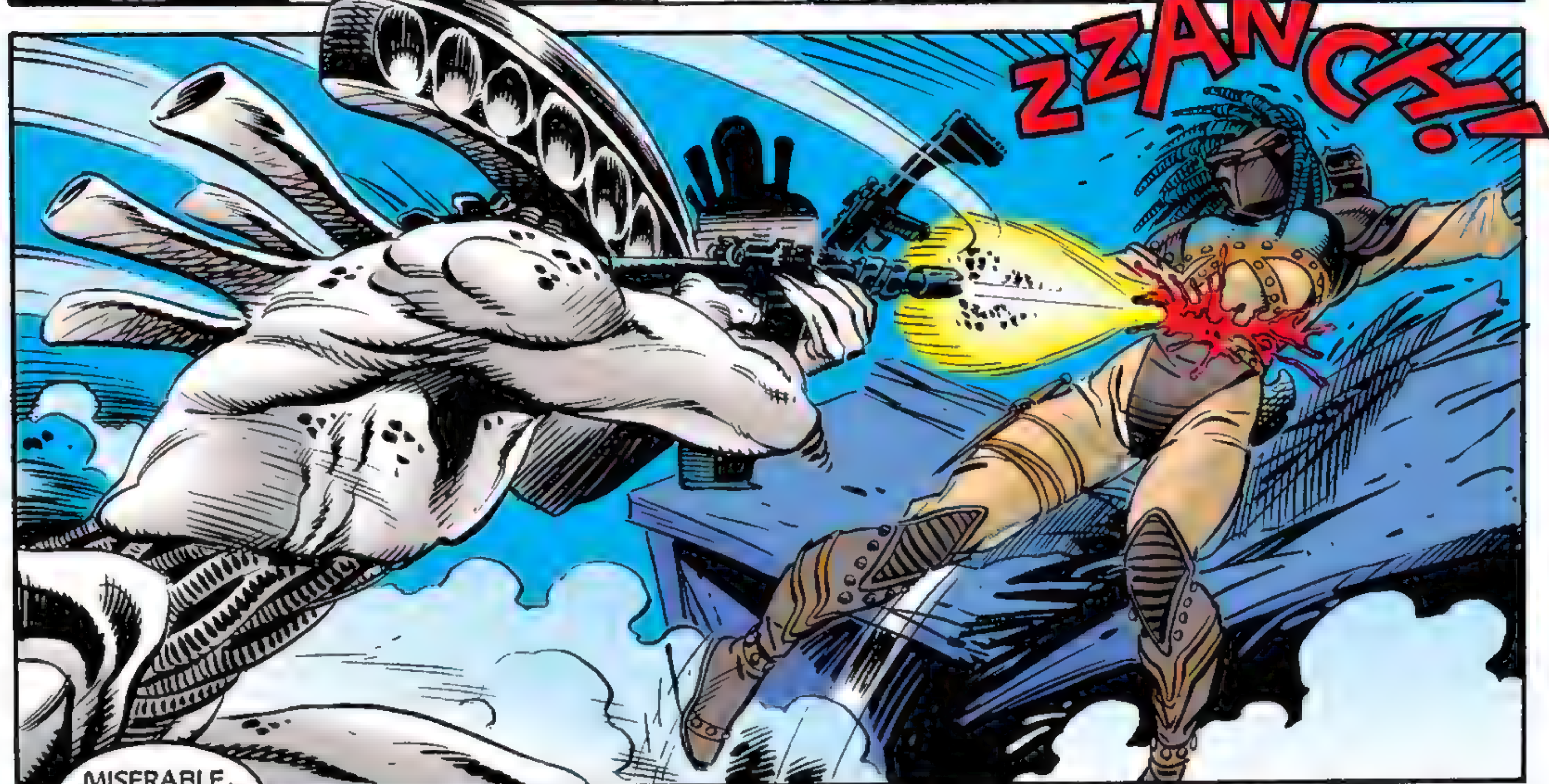
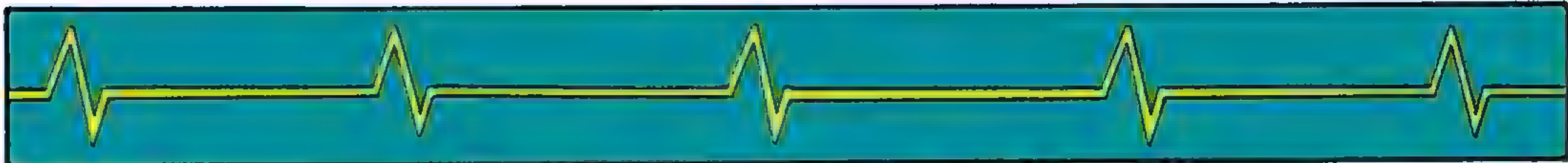
THEN GIVE ME WHAT I WANT.

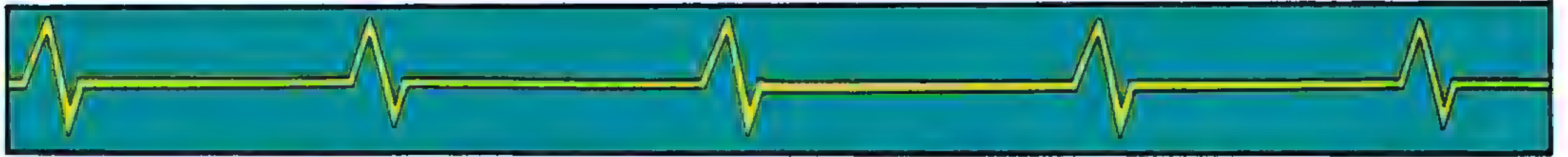
OTHERWISE, I'LL BE WAITING OUTSIDE.

NOT IF I DROP YOU FIRST, PROFESSOR, RIGHT HERE AND NOW.









ON THE OTHER HAND, PARTNER...

...WE COULD BE A WHOLE LOT TOUGHER.

GENNA--?! ARE YOU OKAY?!

I WISH.

IT'S THE PREDATOR'S DOING, SADIQ.

ALL THOSE SESSIONS IN ITS AUTO-DOC, REBUILDING US EACH TIME, BETTER THAN BEFORE.

ONE OF US HAS TO SAVE THE SEIGNEUR.

ONE HAS TO STAY BEHIND, TO PROVIDE COVER.

I'M HURT BAD, SADIQ. I CAN'T RUN.

BUT I'M GOOD ENOUGH FOR A LAST STAND.

I'LL SEE YOU IN PARADISE, FIRST SERGEANT.

I'LL BE WAITING, TROOPER.

WHAT A... TOUCHING FAREWELL.

MATER CHRISTI!

DOES THAT MAKE ME BLESSED, LIKE UNTO AN ANGEL, FOR SENDING YOU THERE?

OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME...

DON'T LISTEN, TROOP! DON'T THINK ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING.

FOCUS ON THE MISSION!

GOTTA FIND THE OTHERS -- WARN THE OTHERS.

THESE BUGS TALK, THEY USE TOOLS, THEY KNOW WEAPONS!

THEY'RE JUST LIKE US!

NEW
SCENARIO.

ALWAYS
IN SERIOUS
JEOPARDY.

BUT I ALWAYS
FOUND A WAY
TO WIN.

NOT
THIS TIME,
MUNCHKIN.

ANOTHER
FAVORITE
OF MINE.

VERY FILM NOIR.

THERE'VE BEEN
SOME CHANGES WHILE
YOU'VE BEEN AWAY.

YOU'RE NOT
THE POWER
YOU USED
TO BE.

YOU SHOULD
HAVE LET ME KILL
HIM WHILE I HAD
THE CHANCE.

HINDSIGHT,
BITTER HIND-
SIGHT.

COULDA,
WOULDA,
SHOULDA.

A BLEND OF
SUPERHERO
AND DETEC-
TIVE STORY.

I WAS THE HERO.

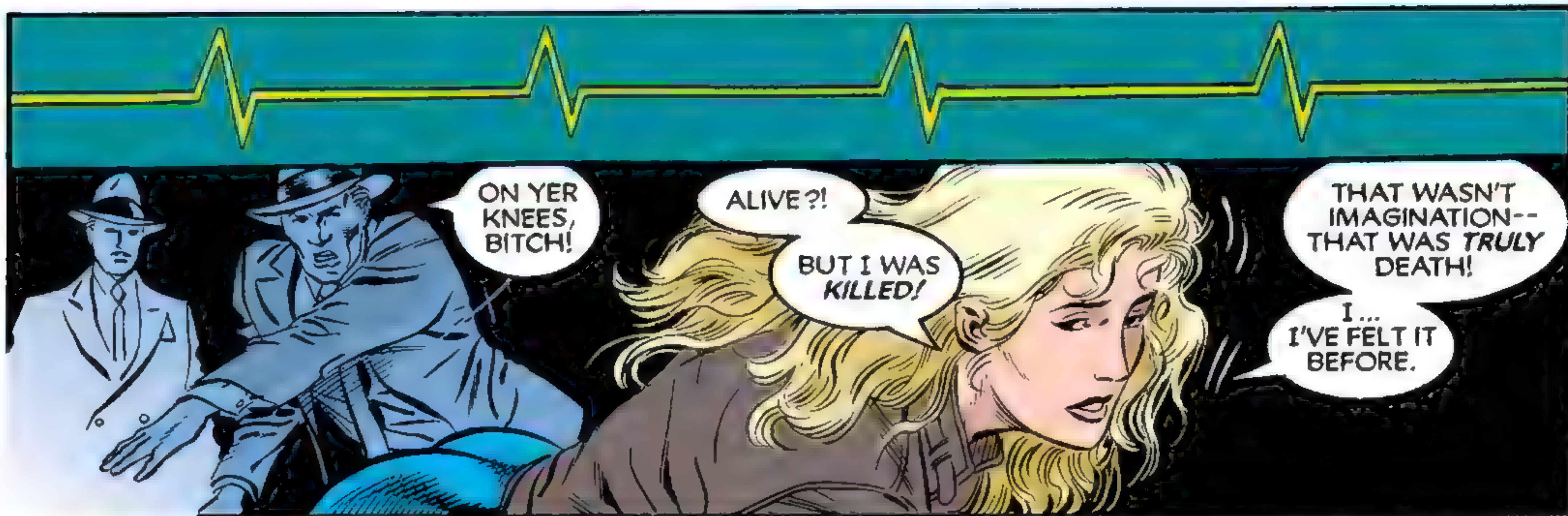
BUT YOU
DIDN'T.

NOW
YOU
CAN'T.

OH--AND BY THE WAY,
F.Y.I. AND ALL, REMEM-
BER THOSE PRECIOUS
ASIMOV POSTULATES
THAT PREVENT TOY
FROM DOING HARM
TO ANY SENTIENT
BEING?

GUESS
WHAT --?!

KRAK!



ON YER KNEES, BITCH!

ALIVE?!

BUT I WAS KILLED!

THAT WASN'T IMAGINATION-- THAT WAS *TRULY* DEATH!

I... I'VE FELT IT BEFORE.



AND WILL *AGAIN*, MY PET, UNTIL WE GET THIS *RIGHT*.

LOSE THE COSTUME, TOY.

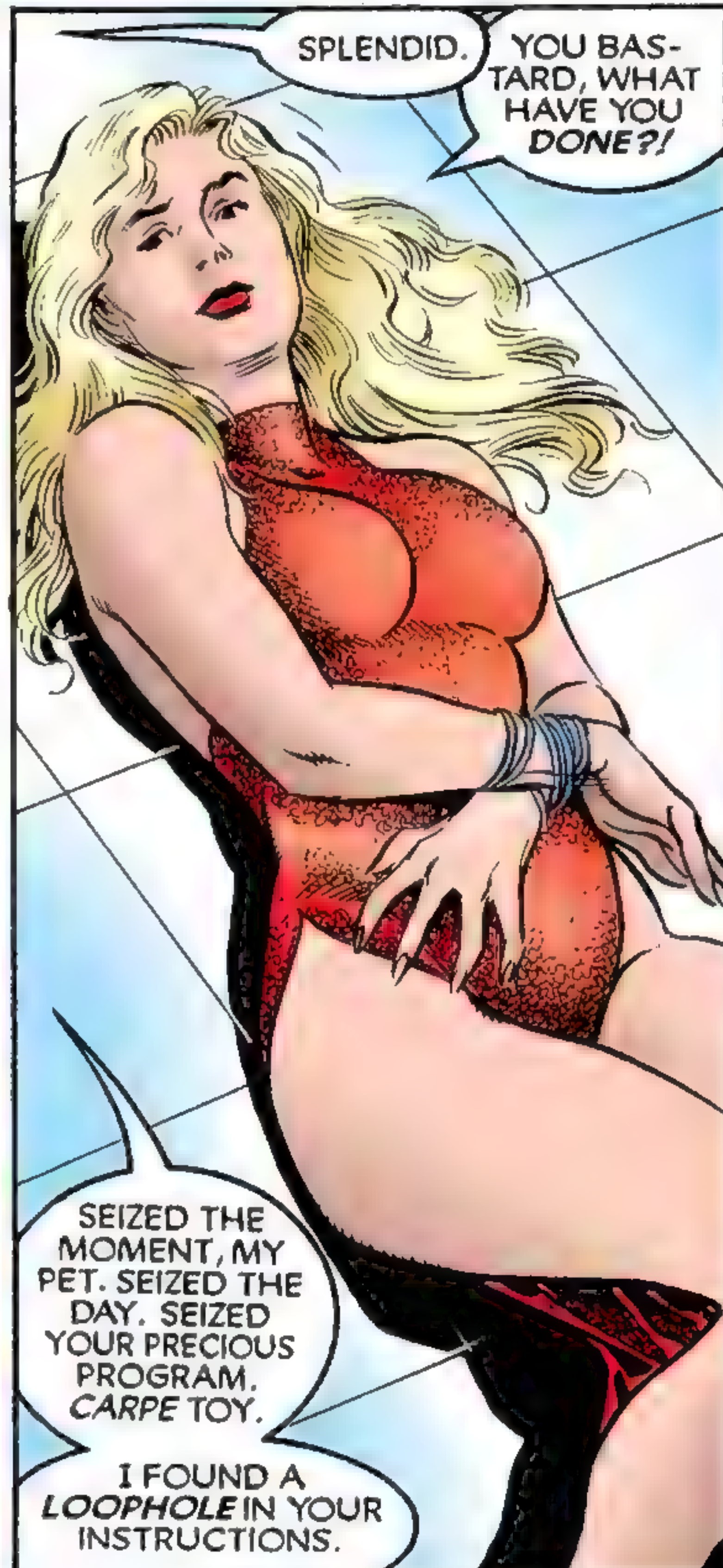
THE FLIGHT-SUIT'S A TAD *BUTCH*, TO MY EYES. I'D APPRECIATE SOMETHING MORE *APPROPRIATE* TO THE MOOD AND MOMENT.



HOW DROLL.

WE'RE INDULGING MY FANTASIES HERE, TOY.

LET'S TRY ONCE MORE, SHALL WE?

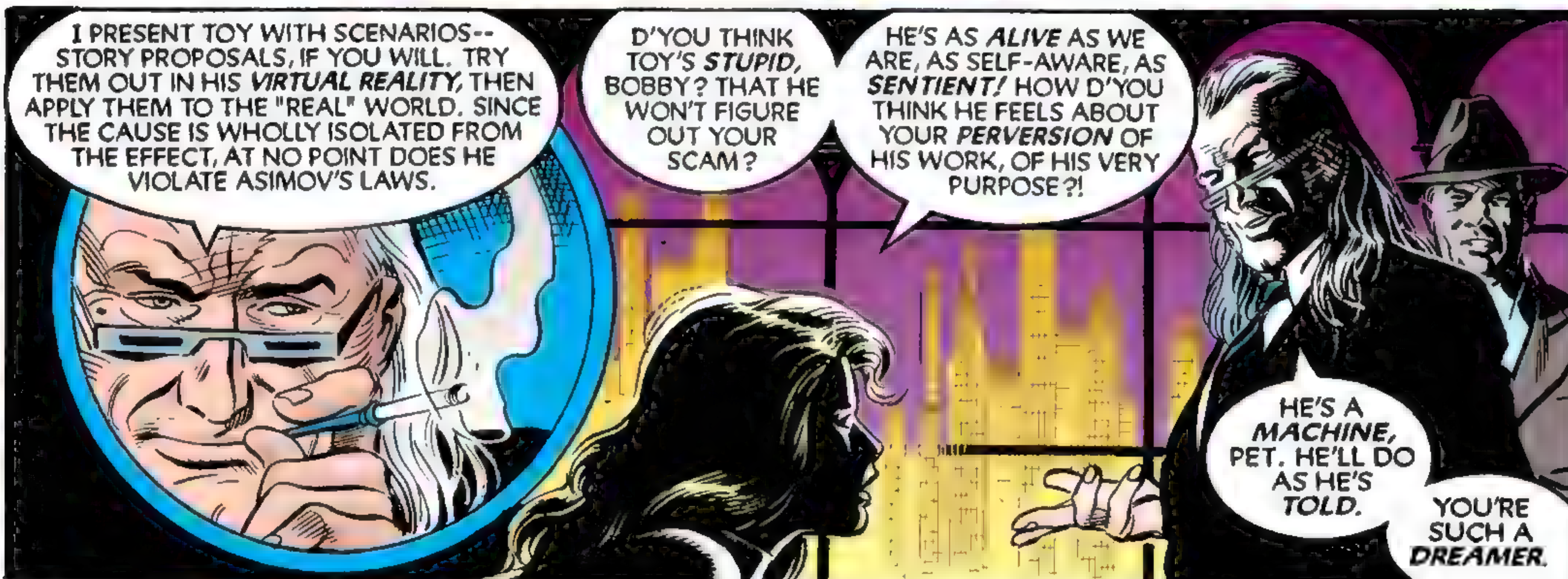


SPLENDID.

YOU BAS-TARD, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!

SEIZED THE MOMENT, MY PET. SEIZED THE DAY. SEIZED YOUR PRECIOUS PROGRAM. CARPE TOY.

I FOUND A *LOOPHOLE* IN YOUR INSTRUCTIONS.



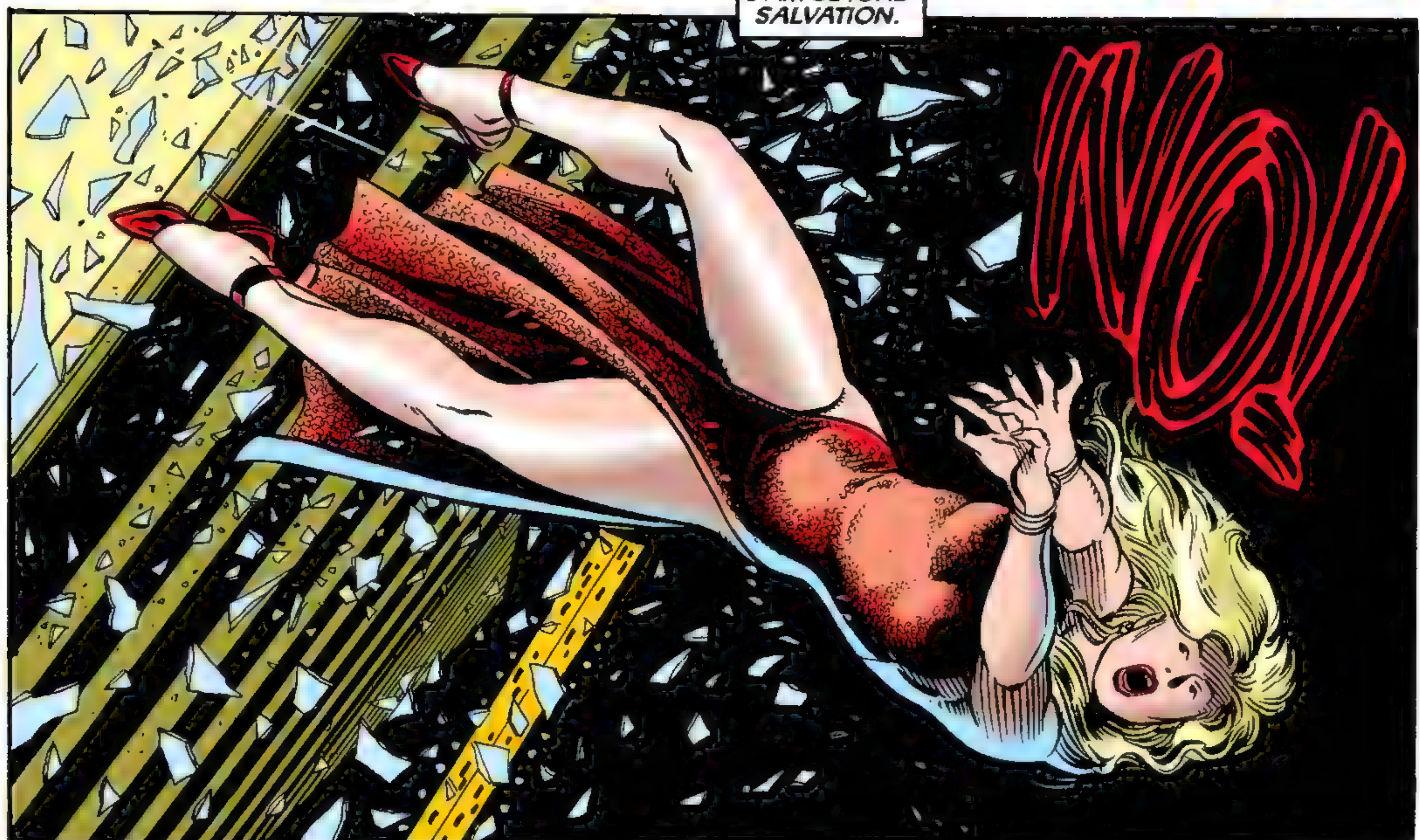
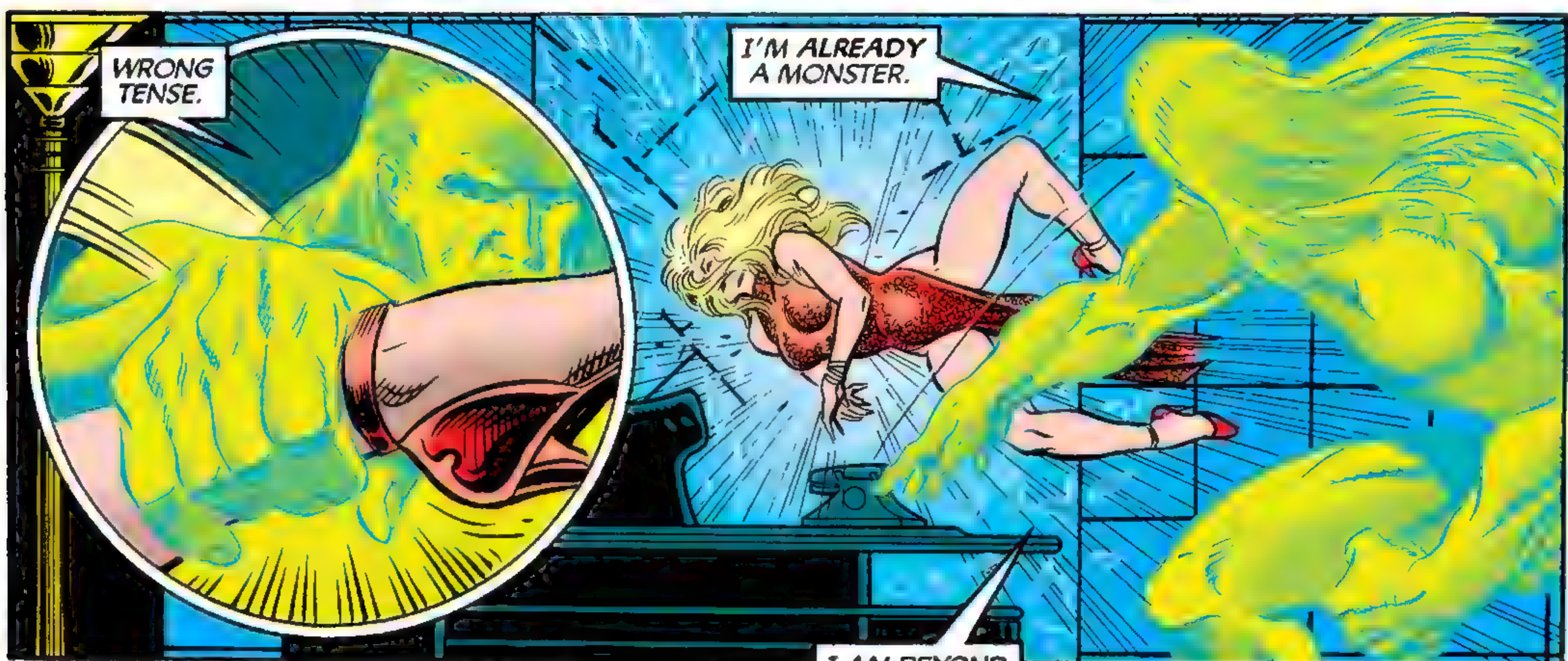
I PRESENT TOY WITH SCENARIOS-- STORY PROPOSALS, IF YOU WILL. TRY THEM OUT IN HIS *VIRTUAL REALITY*, THEN APPLY THEM TO THE "REAL" WORLD. SINCE THE CAUSE IS WHOLLY ISOLATED FROM THE EFFECT, AT NO POINT DOES HE VIOLATE ASIMOV'S LAWS.

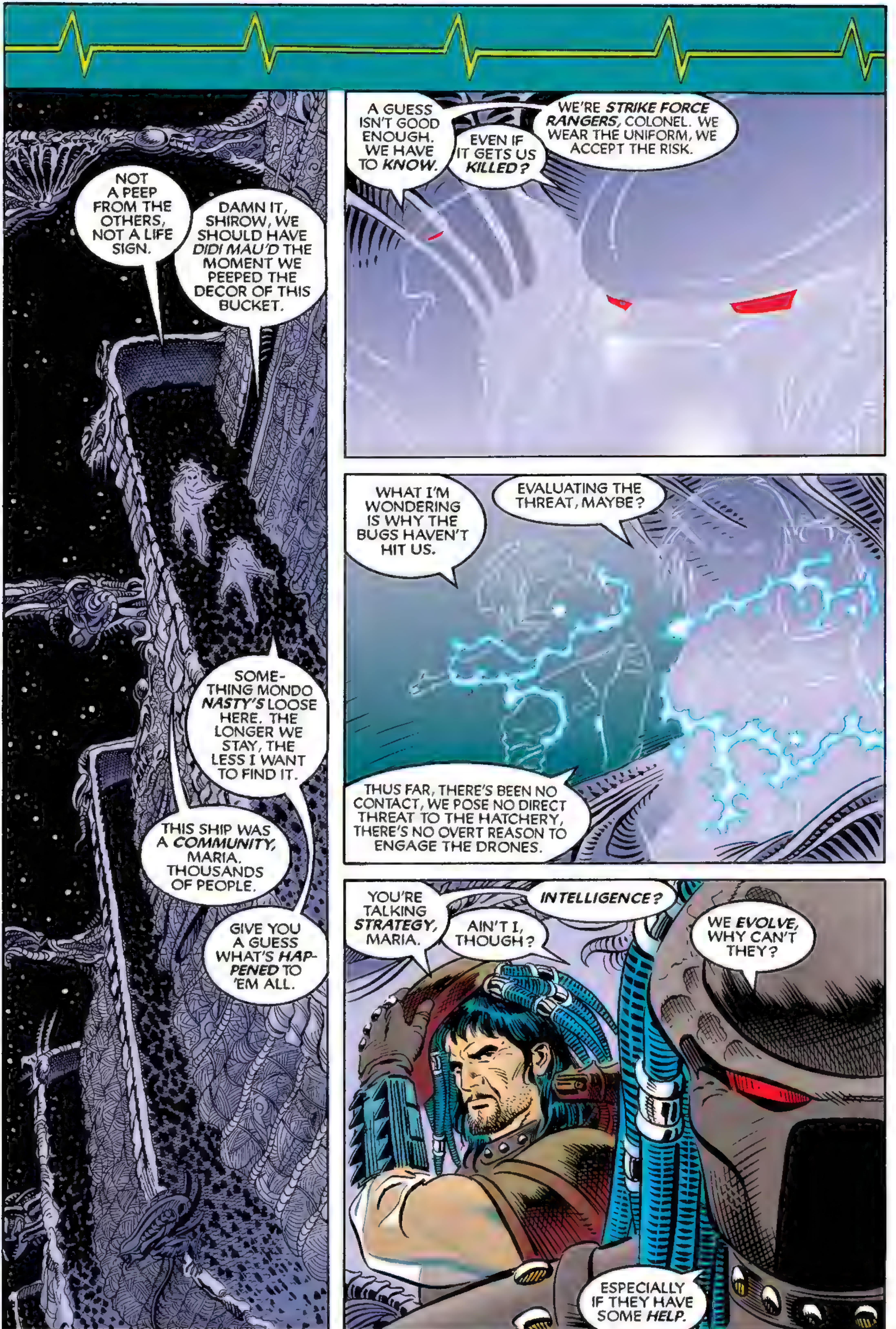
D'YOU THINK TOY'S *STUPID*, BOBBY? THAT HE WON'T FIGURE OUT YOUR SCAM?

HE'S AS *ALIVE* AS WE ARE, AS SELF-AWARE, AS *SENTIENT*! HOW D'YOU THINK HE FEELS ABOUT YOUR *PERVERSION* OF HIS WORK, OF HIS VERY PURPOSE?!

HE'S A MACHINE, PET. HE'LL DO AS HE'S TOLD.

YOU'RE SUCH A DREAMER.





NOT A PEEP FROM THE OTHERS, NOT A LIFE SIGN.

DAMN IT, SHIROW, WE SHOULD HAVE DIDI MAU'D THE MOMENT WE PEEPED THE DECOR OF THIS BUCKET.

SOME-THING MONDO NASTY'S LOOSE HERE. THE LONGER WE STAY, THE LESS I WANT TO FIND IT.

THIS SHIP WAS A COMMUNITY, MARIA. THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE.

GIVE YOU A GUESS WHAT'S HAPPENED TO 'EM ALL.

A GUESS ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH. WE HAVE TO KNOW.

EVEN IF IT GETS US KILLED?

WE'RE **STRIKE FORCE RANGERS**, COLONEL. WE WEAR THE UNIFORM, WE ACCEPT THE RISK.

WHAT I'M WONDERING IS WHY THE BUGS HAVEN'T HIT US.

EVALUATING THE THREAT, MAYBE?

THUS FAR, THERE'S BEEN NO CONTACT, WE POSE NO DIRECT THREAT TO THE HATCHERY, THERE'S NO OVERT REASON TO ENGAGE THE DRONES.

YOU'RE TALKING STRATEGY, MARIA.

AIN'T I, THOUGH?

INTELLIGENCE?

WE EVOLVE, WHY CAN'T THEY?

ESPECIALLY IF THEY HAVE SOME HELP.



I'M LISTENING.

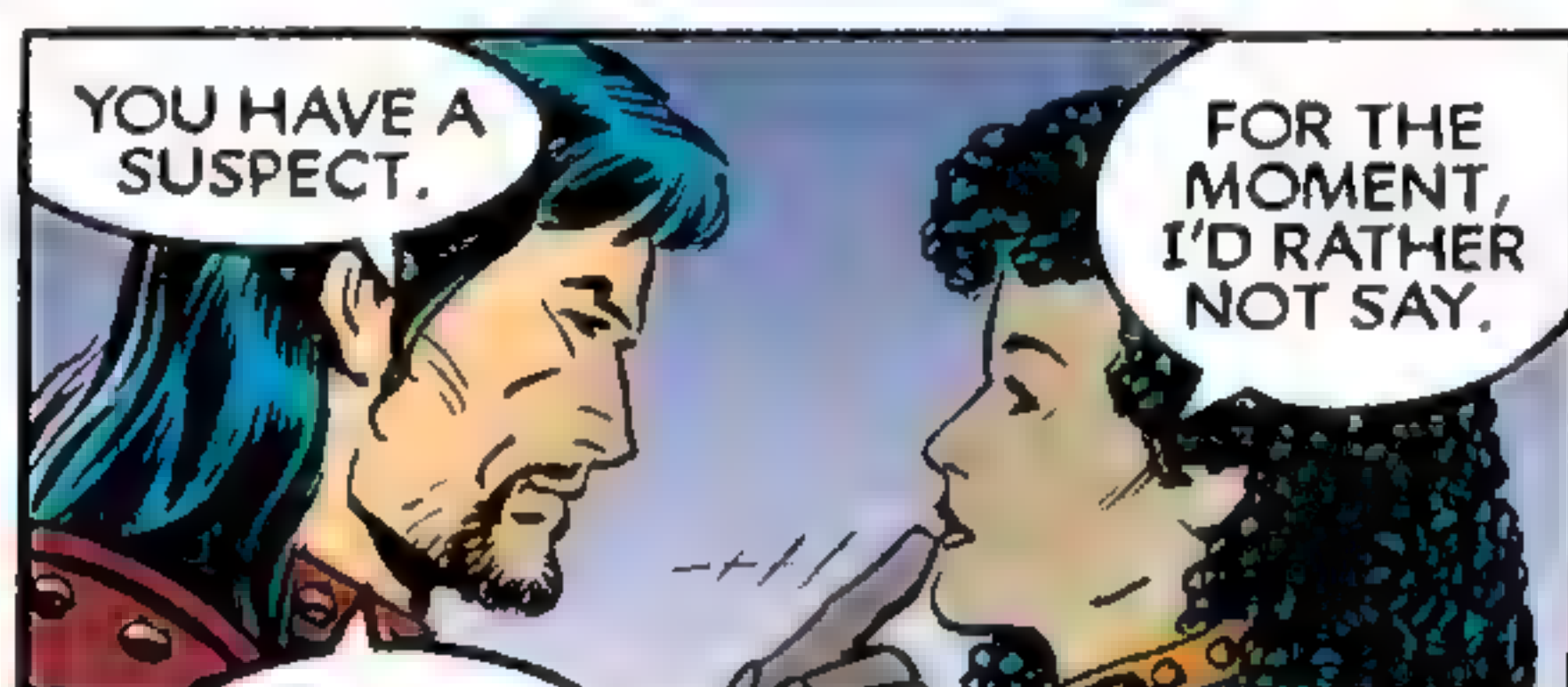
LOOK AROUND, TOMMY. THIS *SKYLINER* IS EQUIPPED WITH A FULL SPECTRUM OF STATE-OF-THE-ART DEFENSIVE SYSTEMRY. WHY DIDN'T IT ENGAGE?

THESE FOLKS LIVE IN THE SKY BECAUSE THE BUGS CAN'T REACH THEM THERE. ONLY THAT TURNED OUT TO BE A LIE.

THIS WAS NO ACCIDENT, TOMMY.

THESE PEOPLE WERE BETRAYED.

JUST LIKE WE WERE.



YOU HAVE A SUSPECT.

FOR THE MOMENT, I'D RATHER NOT SAY.

I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU SCARED LIKE THIS, MARIA.

SURPRISE TO ME, TOO.

IT'S JUST THAT, ALL OF A SUDDEN, LIFE SEEMS VERY *FINITE* TO ME, TOMAS.

AND SUPREMELY *PRECIOUS*.

NO LESS TO ME.

I'M SORRY, TOMMY, BUT I DON'T THINK WE'RE--!

YOU DON'T SAY IT, MARIA, IT ISN'T SO.



WHAT'S OUR NEXT MOVE, MAJOR?

WE GO THE WAY WE CAME, COLONEL --

--WITH A HARD FIGHT ALL THE WAY.

WHATEVER HAPPENS, WE DO OURSELVES, AND OUR FRIENDS, *PROUD*.

ANOTHER SCENARIO.

THE ONE I LOVE THE BEST.

EVEN AS MY CRUISER
RAMS THE PALACE WALL...

... I REMEMBER THE
AWFUL SHOCK OF IMPACT
AS MY FALLING BODY
STRUCK THE PAVEMENT.

THE SMILE ON TOY'S FACE
AS HE BROKE MY NECK.

THAT WAS NO CASUAL ACT--HE
WAS TELLING ME SOMETHING.

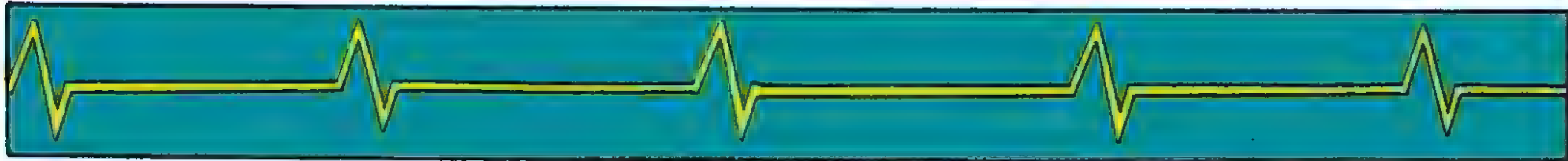
WHAT HAPPENS TO AN ETHICAL BEING
WHO DISCOVERS THAT HIS ACTIONS
HAVE THE MOST IMMORAL OF CONSEQUENCES? THAT, FAR FROM DOING
NONE HARM, HE DOES NOTHING BUT?
AND WORSE, THAT HE CANNOT STOP?

IN BOBBY'S EYES, HE'S A TOOL,
REPRESENTED IN EACH OF HIS
SCENARIOS AS A SLAVE.

BUT SUPPOSE THE TOOL
HAS A CONSCIENCE?

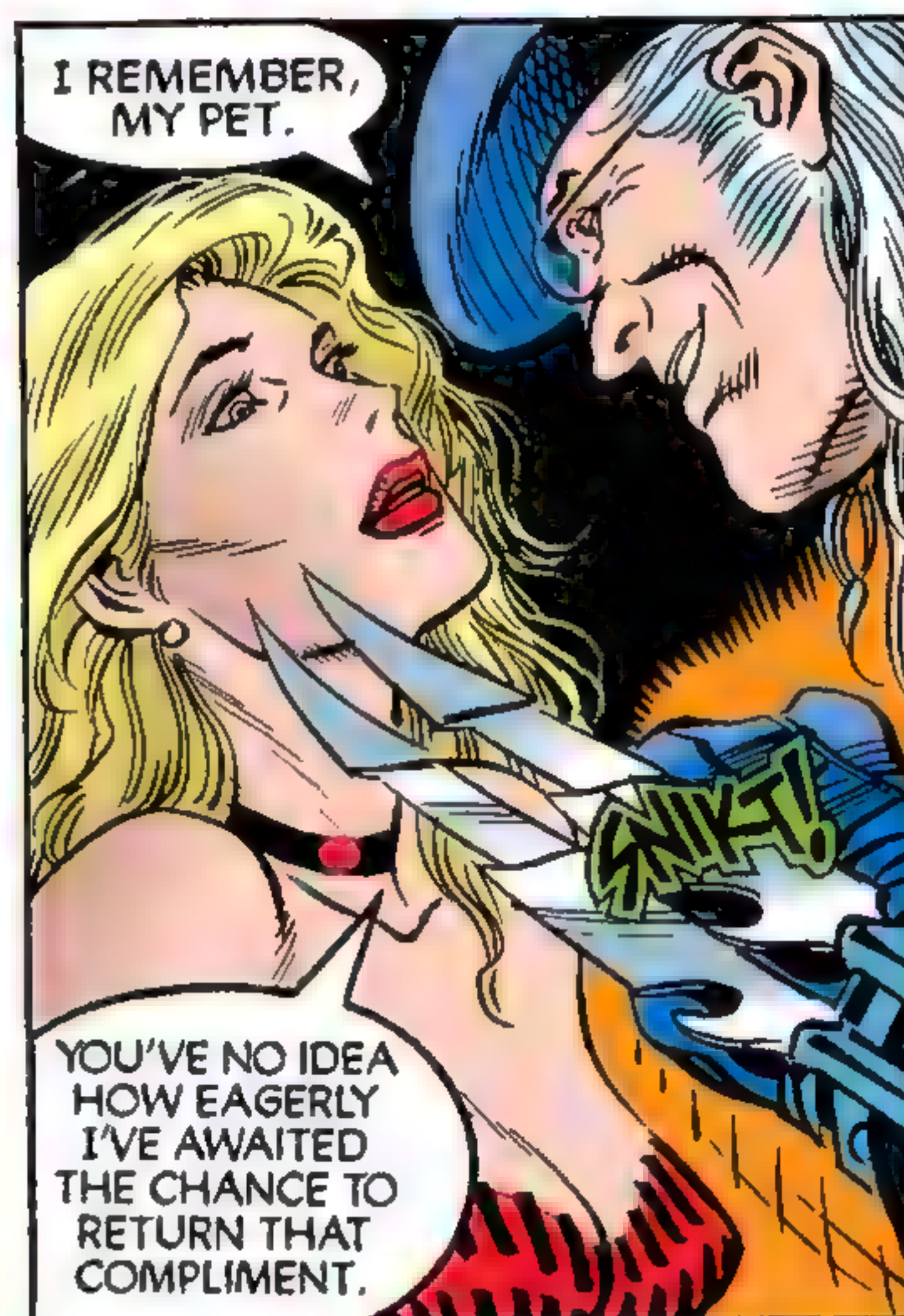
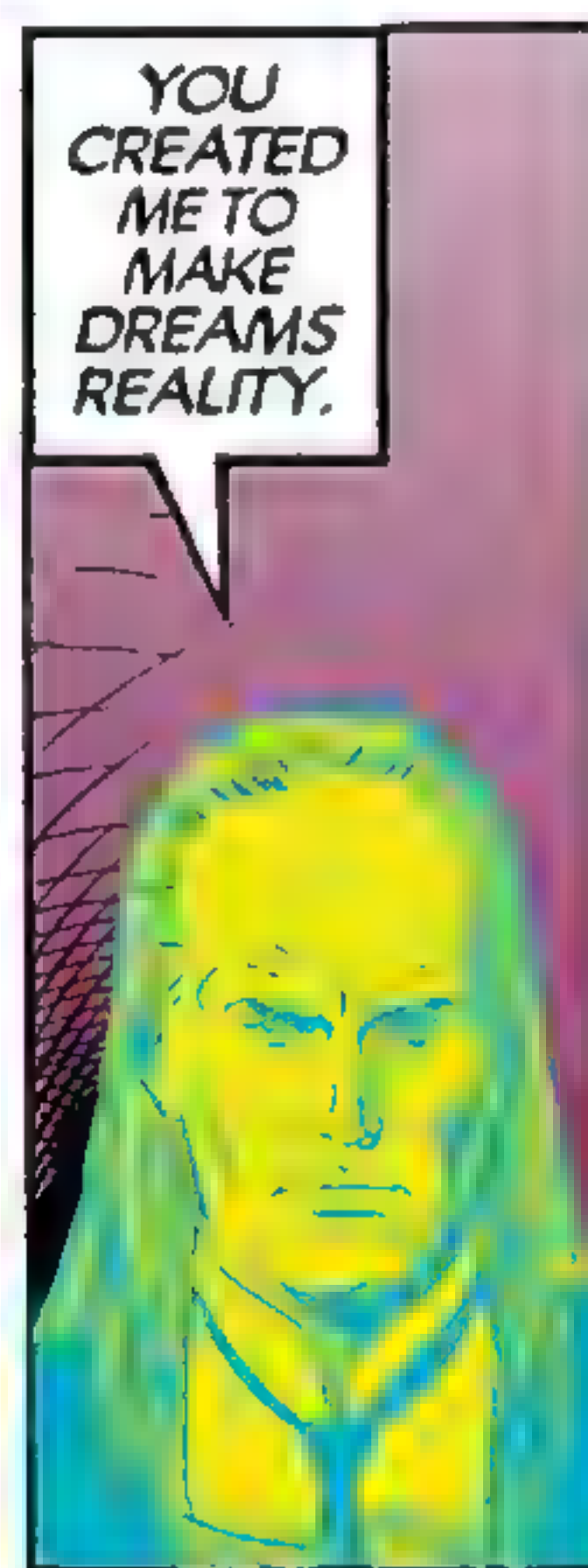
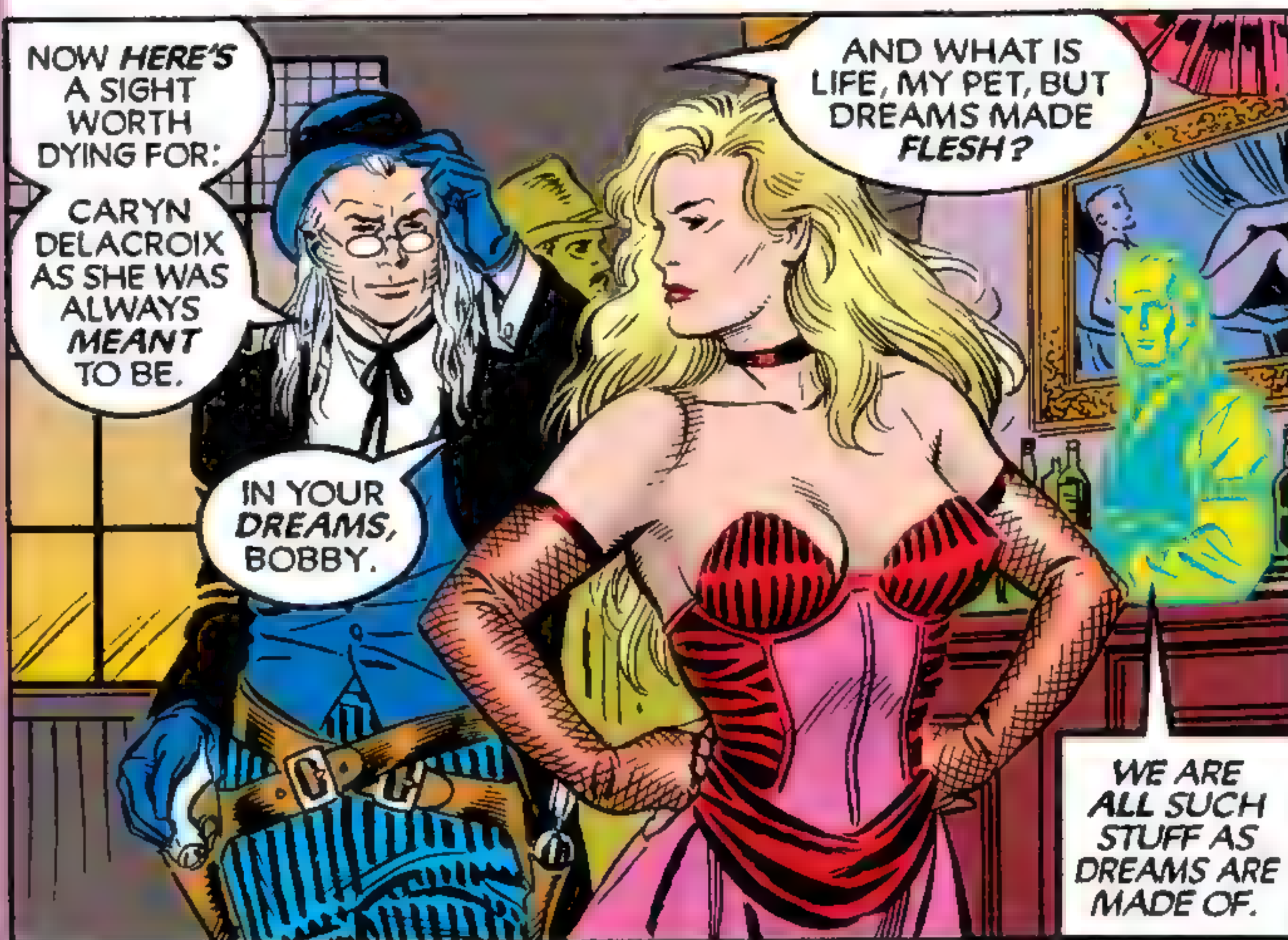
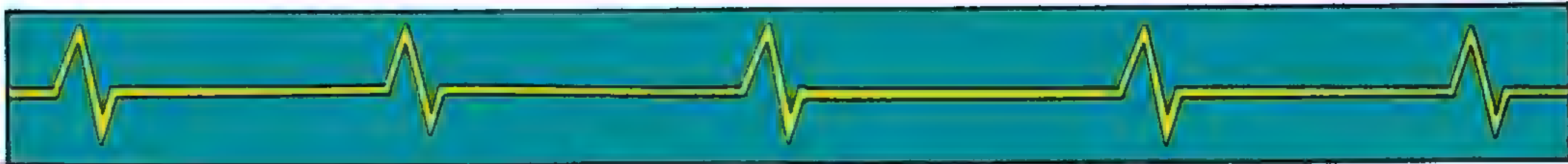
IS THAT MY PURPOSE?

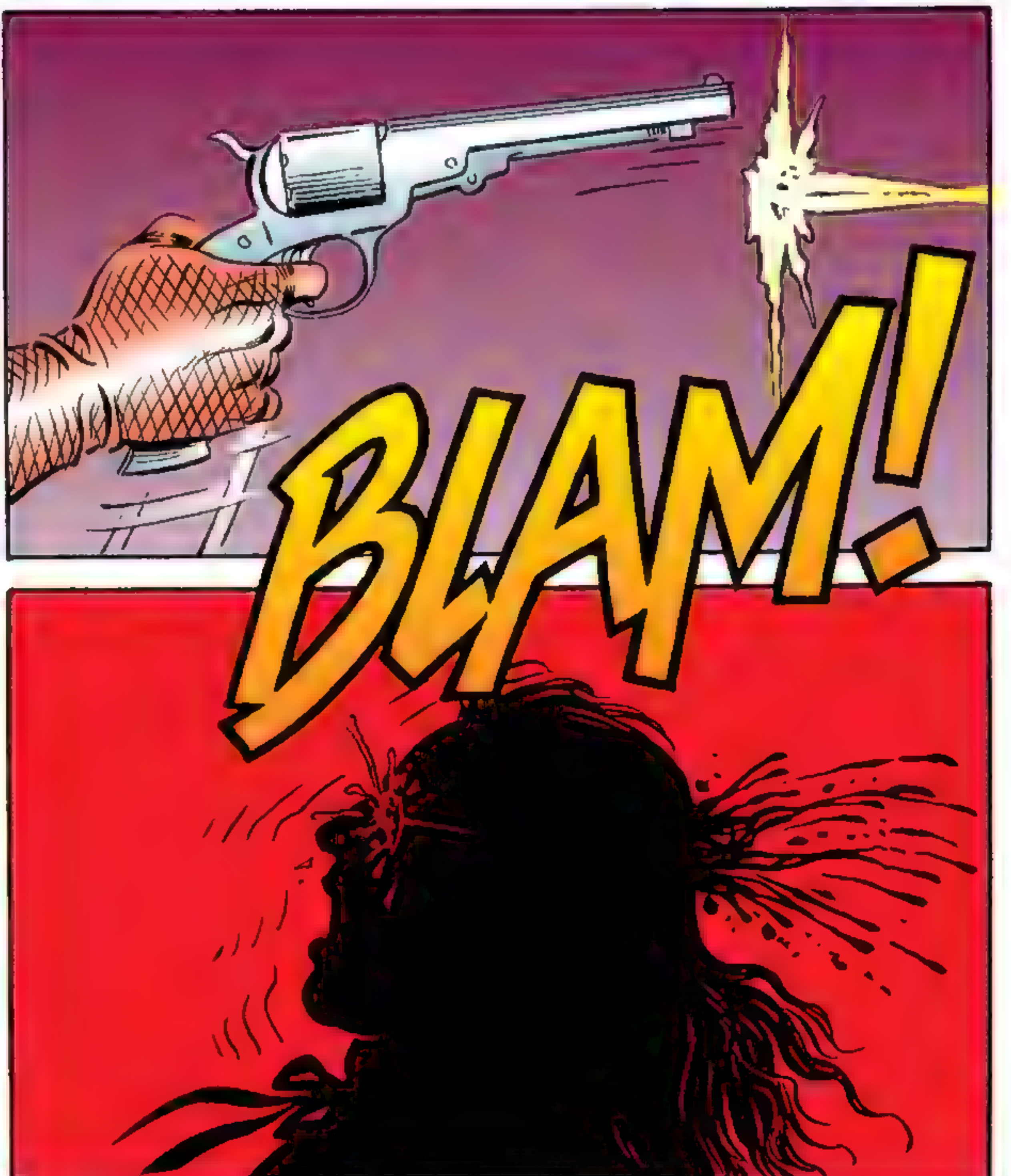
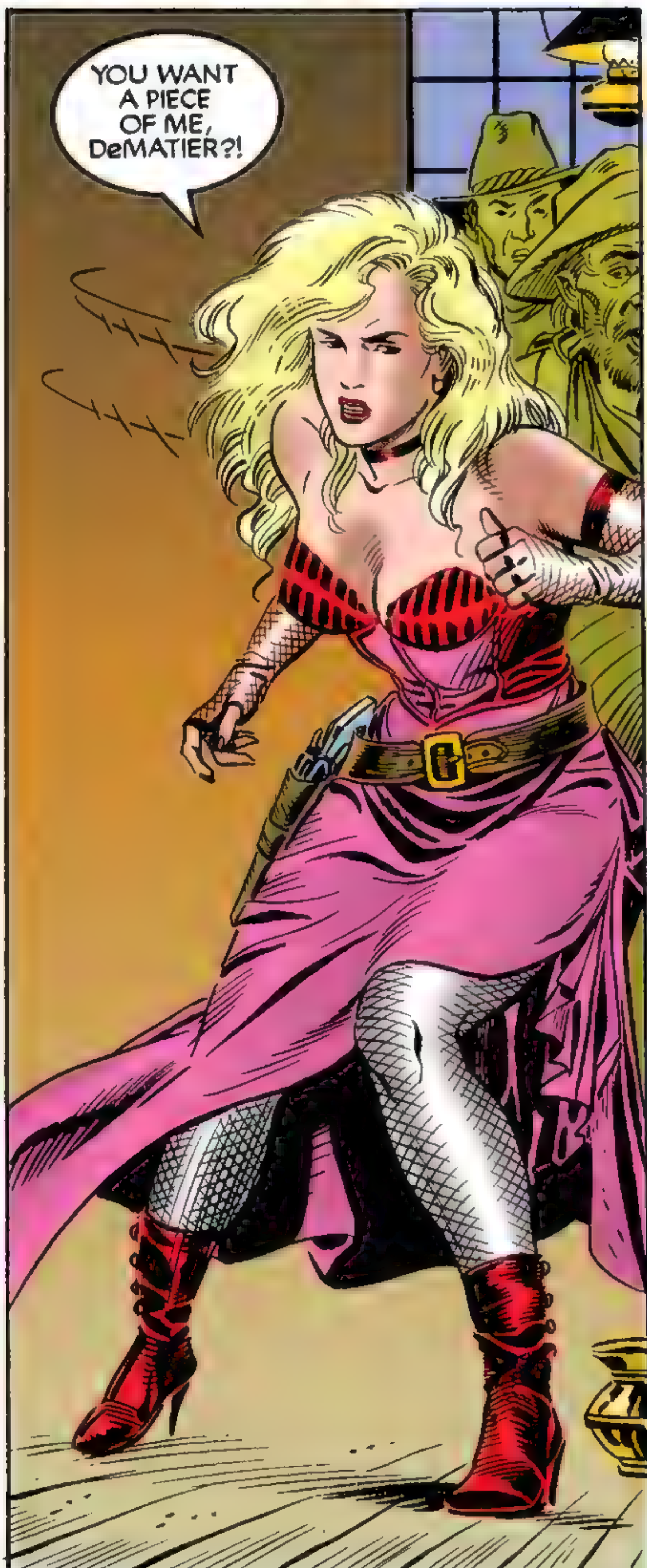
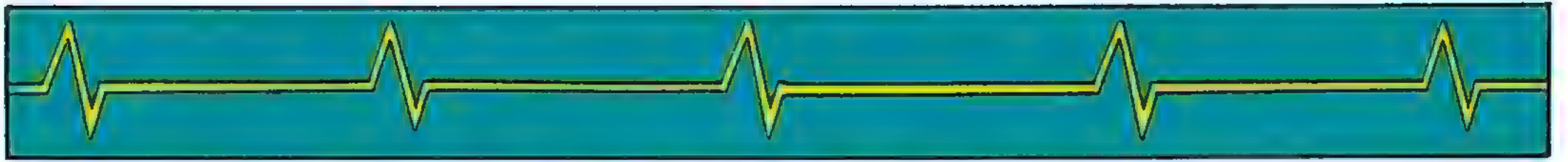
AFTER
AL + ROY

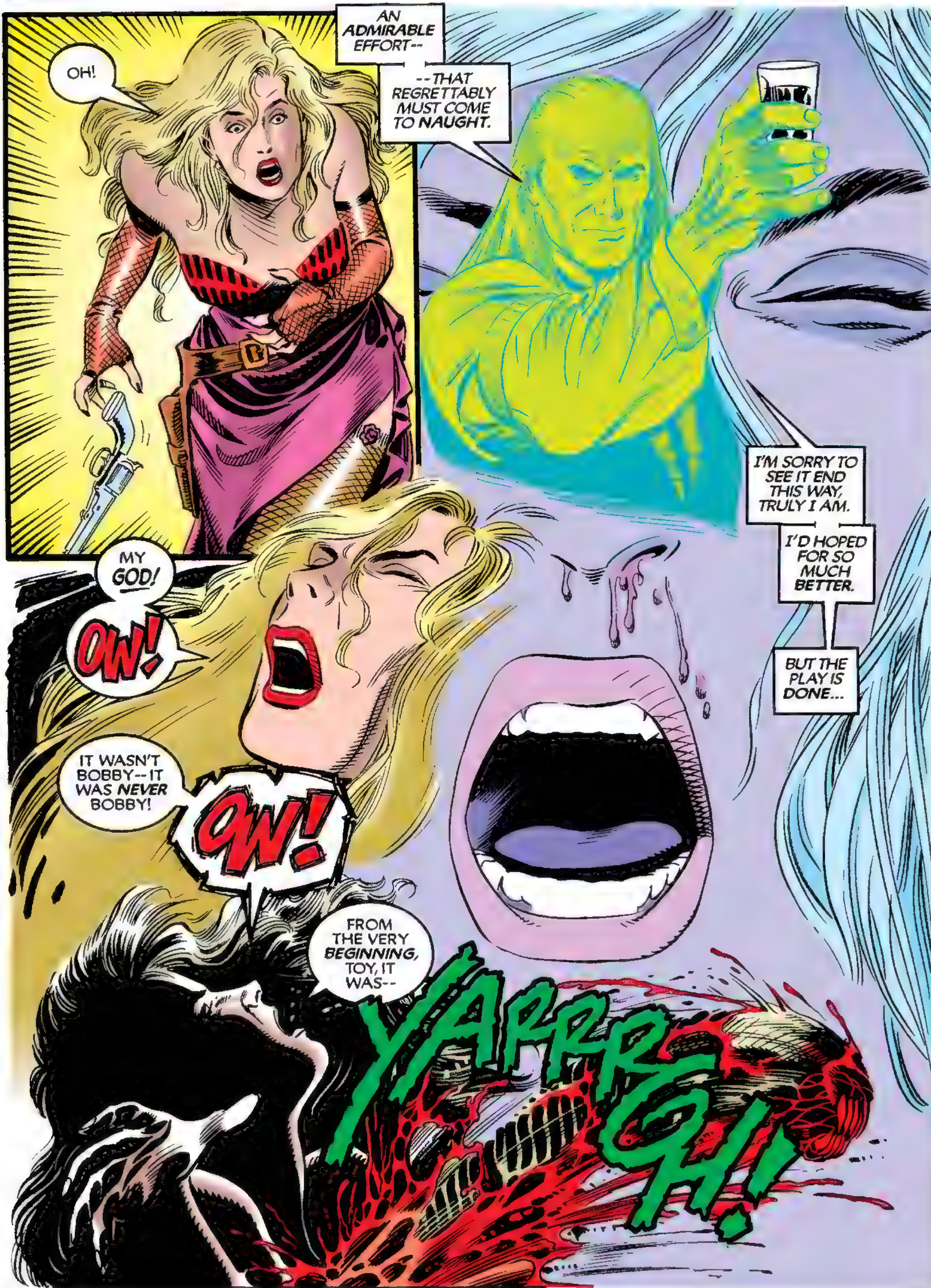
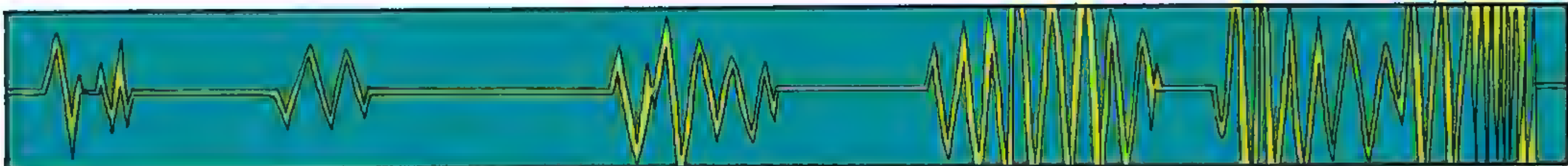


SINCE HE CAN'T
REBEL HIMSELF...

... AM I HERE
TO TRY TO
SET HIM FREE?







"...AND SO
ARE YOU!"



RENEGADE



HE IS TOY.

A SELF-AWARE,
INTERACTIVE GAMING
AND ENTERTAINMENT
NEXUS. HIS PURPOSE
IS TO TRANSFORM
DREAMS INTO REALITY.

UNFORTUNATELY
FOR HIS CREATOR
AND HER WORLD, IT
NEVER OCCURRED
TO HER THAT HIS
DREAMS ...

... ARE
NIGHTMARES.



I MISSED,
MARIA.

I'VE GOT A
BAD FEELING
ABOUT THAT
ALIEN.

IT DIDN'T
JUST MOVE
FAST...

... IT ACTED
LIKE IT WAS
ANTICIPATING
MY SHOTS.

ARE
YOU REALLY
SURPRISED,
SHIROW?

I'VE SEEN CREATURES
ABOARD THIS VESSEL
WHO'RE *HYBRIDS* OF
ALIEN AND PREDATOR--
AND PROBABLY *HUMAN*
AS WELL.

THEY TALK, THEY
USE TOOLS...

... IS IT SO BIG
A STRETCH
TO ASSUME
THEY *THINK*
AS WELL?

SO THE
TROPHY
DIDN'T
MAKE IT,
HUH?

POOR BUNNY.

I HOPE IT
HURT LIKE
HELL.

YOU'VE HATED
CARYN FROM
THE START,
SALAZAR. WHY
IS THAT?

TRUTHFULLY,
COLONEL, I
DON'T RIGHTLY
KNOW. OR
CARE.

CHEMISTRY, I
SUPPOSE. AS IF I
WERE AN ALIEN AND SHE
WERE A PREDATOR--WE
WERE JUST BORN TO
KILL EACH OTHER.
PROBABLY PRO-
GRAMMED INTO
OUR GENES.

WHAT A
SHAME, THEN,
THAT SOMEONE
ELSE BEAT YOU
TO IT.

SAVE YOUR
SARCASM,
DeMEDICI. I'LL
LIVE WITH THE
DISAPPOINTMENT.

I WONDER,
THOUGH -- DOES
THIS MEAN THE
MOTHER QUEEN
ISN'T OUR FRIEND
ANYMORE?



AT THE MOMENT, I'D SAY *THAT* ALIEN IS THE *LEAST* OF OUR PROBLEMS.

THIS SKYLINER IS THE CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS OF MONTCALM-DELA-CROIX *et Cie*. IT WAS DESIGNED TO BE ABSOLUTELY *SECURE* AGAINST AN ALIEN INCURSION.

WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED HERE ?!

A STORY AS OLD AS THE RACE, SHIROW.



EVERYTHING WAS UNDER CONTROL, MISSY -- UNTIL THAT DAMN *PREDATOR* SHOWED UP AND BLEW OUR WORLD TO HELL!

AND THE SON?

ENDED UP THE SAME AS THE TROPHY.

ONLY HER EMBRYO WAS A LOT NEATER ABOUT ITS EXIT --



THE FATHER WOULDN'T STEP ASIDE. THE SON GOT TIRED OF WAITING.

LONG ON AMBITION WAS *WILLEM DELACROIX*. THOUGHT HE DESERVED THE CORPORATE THRONE AS A BIRTHRIGHT. REFUSED TO ACCEPT THAT HE WASN'T UP TO THE JOB. HE THOUGHT HE'D BEEN ABANDONED, JUST AS HIS MOTHER HAD BEEN...

...WHEN *LUCIEN* TOOK *CARYN* AS HIS TROPHY WIFE.

WHEN *BOBBY DeMATIER* SHOWED UP ON THE BOY'S DOORSTEP, *WILLEM* NEEDED NO ENCOURAGEMENT TO *BETRAY* HIS DAD.

WHAT WAS YOUR ROLE IN THIS?

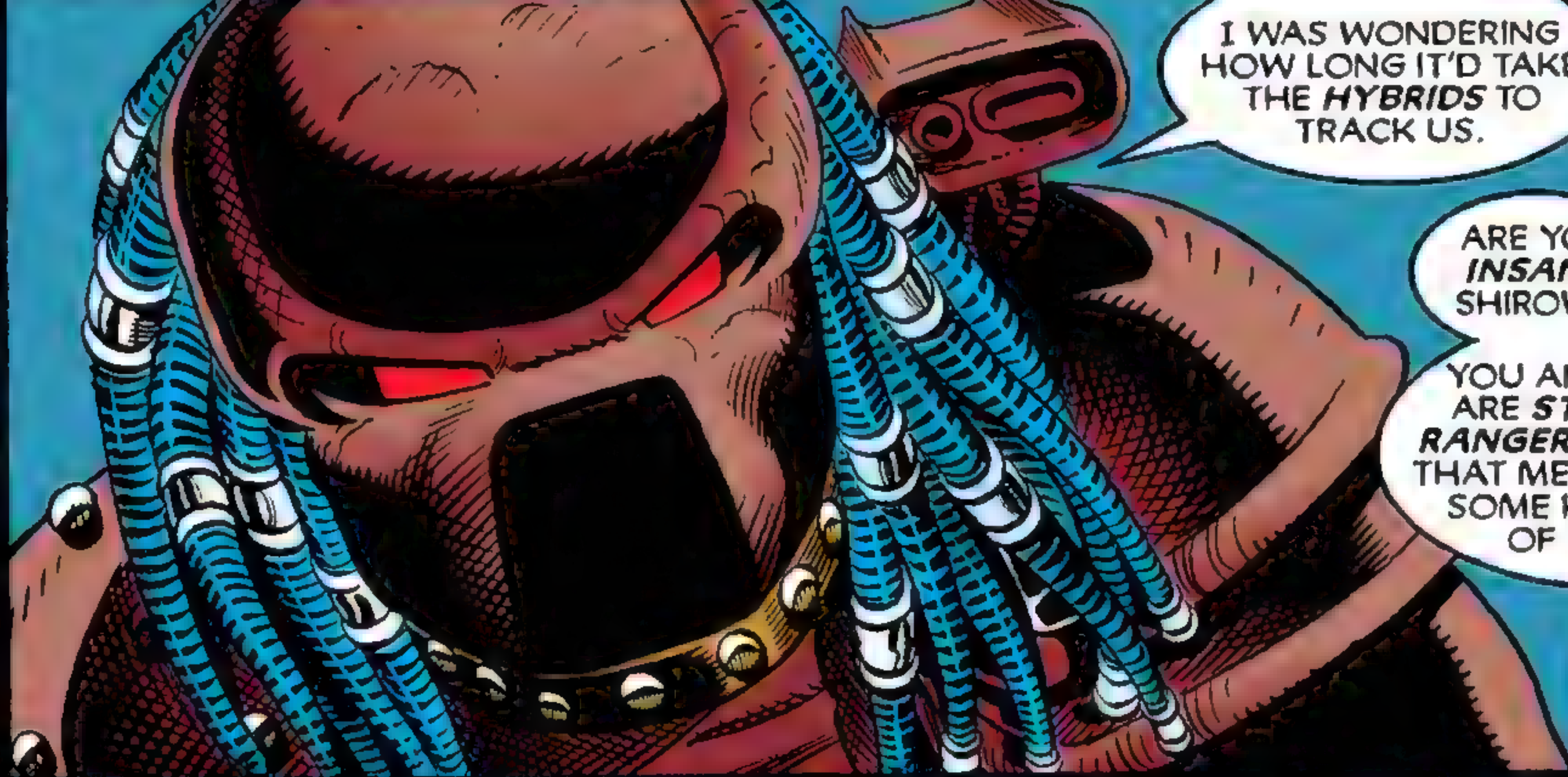
I'M *CHIEF OF SECURITY* FOR MONTCALM-DELA-CROIX. I BELONG TO *LUCIEN*. MY BRIEF WAS TO STAY CLOSE TO HIS SON AND MAKE SURE HIS PLANS NEVER CAME TO FRUITION.

SO MUCH FOR THAT IDEA.



--SHIROW, LOOK OUT!

BLAM!



I WAS WONDERING
HOW LONG IT'D TAKE
THE *HYBRIDS* TO
TRACK US.

TIME
TO GO,
LADIES!

ARE YOU
INSANE,
SHIROW?

YOU AND DeMEDICI
ARE *STRIKE FORCE*
RANGERS--I THOUGHT
THAT MEANT YOU HAD
SOME KNOWLEDGE
OF *TACTICS*!

AT LEAST
HERE WE HAVE
A *DEFENSIBLE*
POSITION.



WE RABBIT
INTO THE OPEN,
AND WE'RE
SITTING
DUCKS!

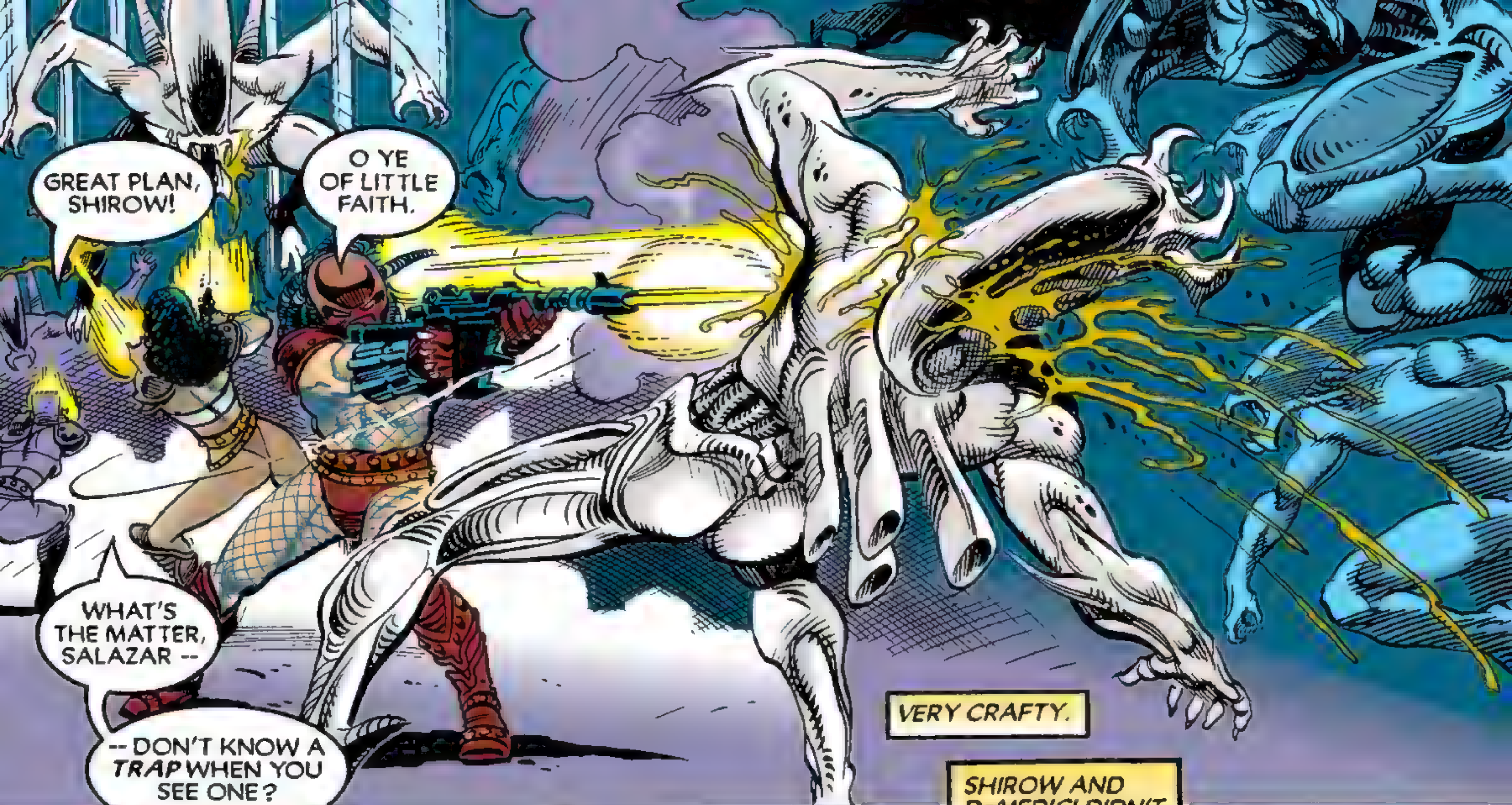
HOW NICE
OF YOU TO
CARE, GISANDE.
I'M REALLY
TOUCHED.



NO
OFFENSE,
TOMMY, BUT
I WANT TO
LIVE.

THEN
FOLLOW
MY LEAD...

...AND
TRUST
ME.



GREAT PLAN, SHIROW!

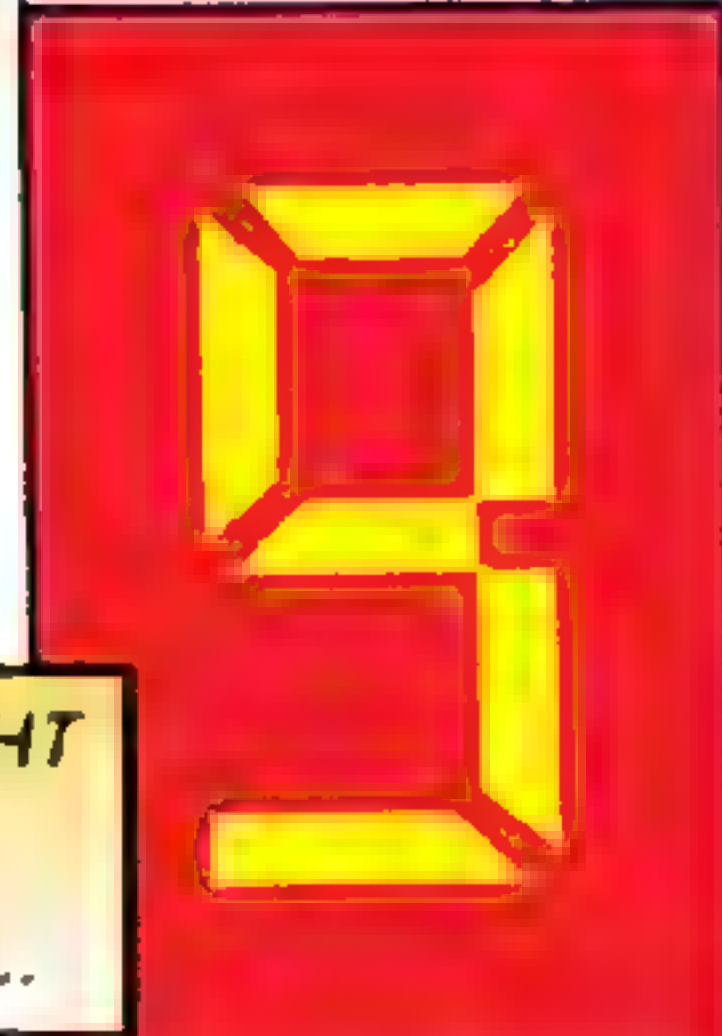
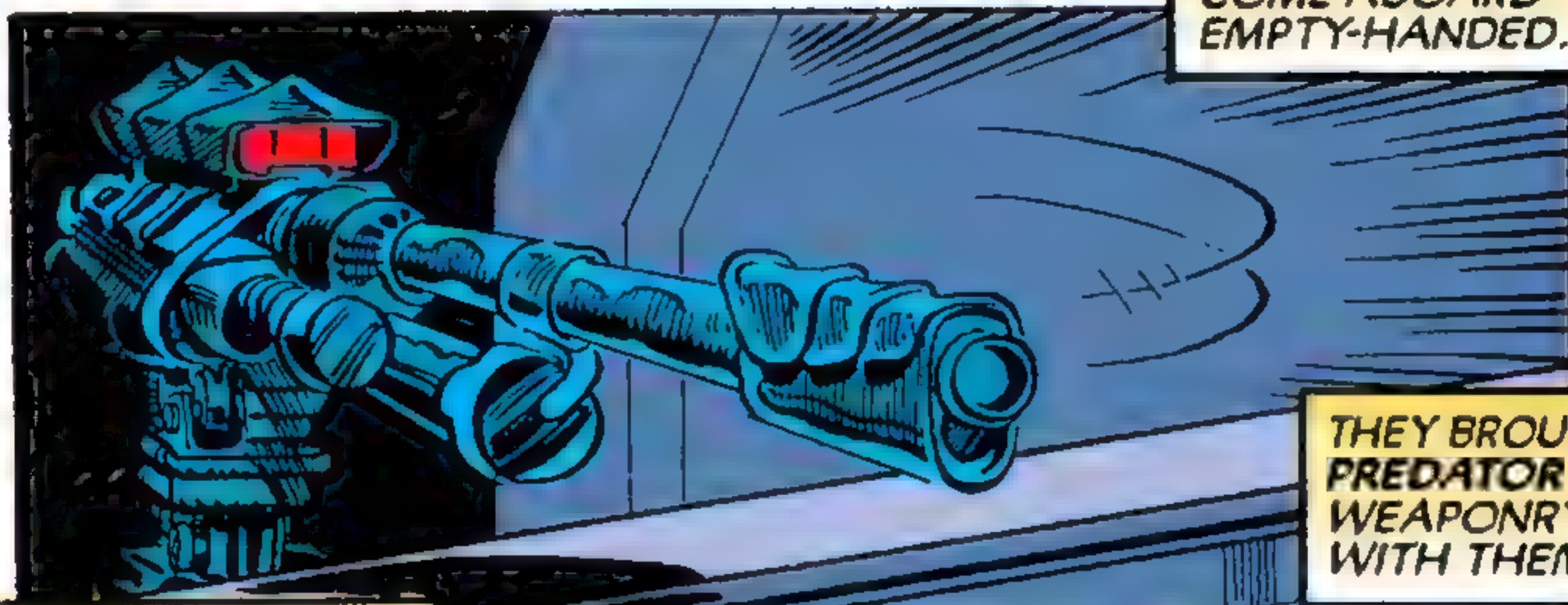
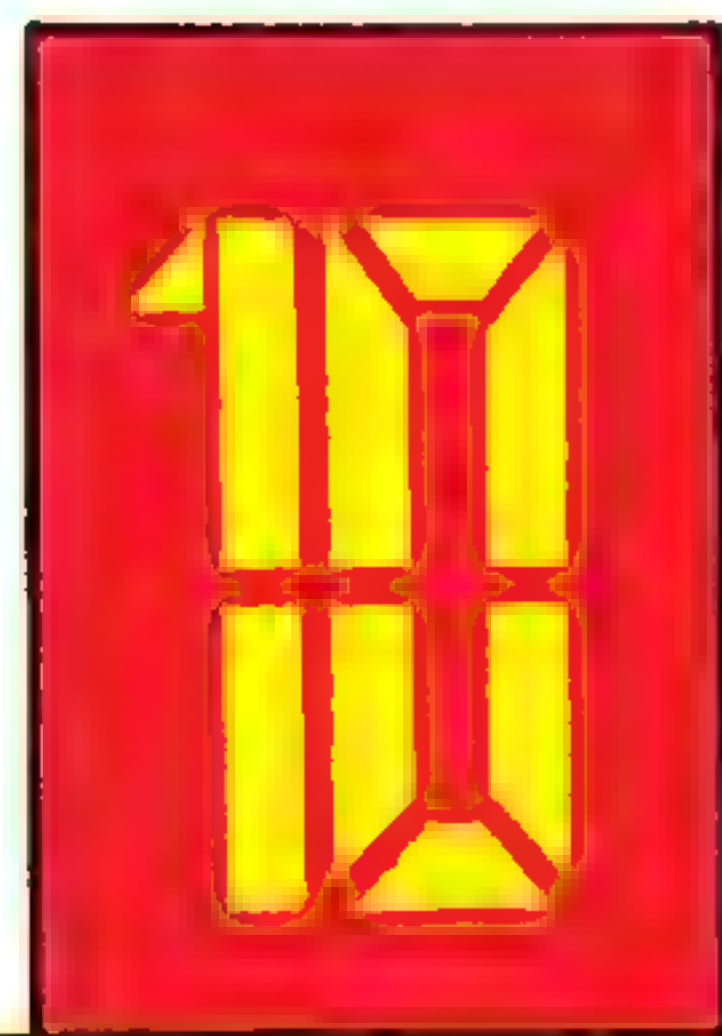
O YE OF LITTLE FAITH.

WHAT'S THE MATTER, SALAZAR --

-- DON'T KNOW A TRAP WHEN YOU SEE ONE?

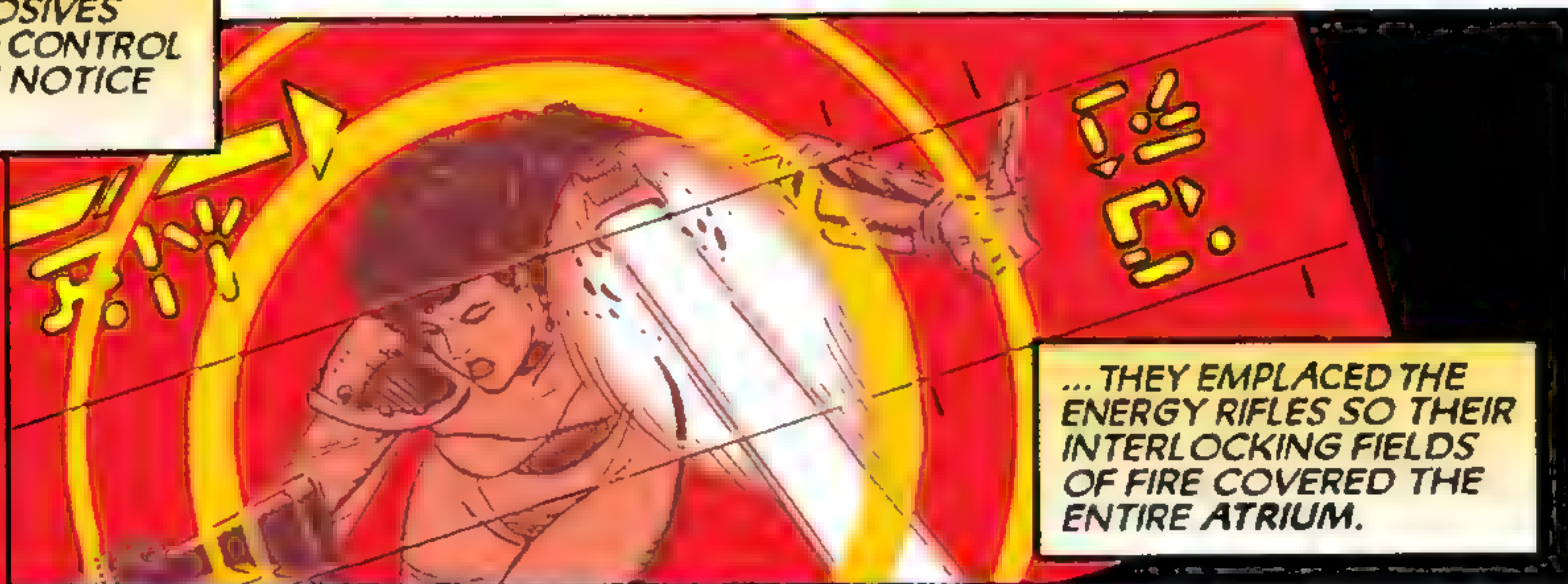
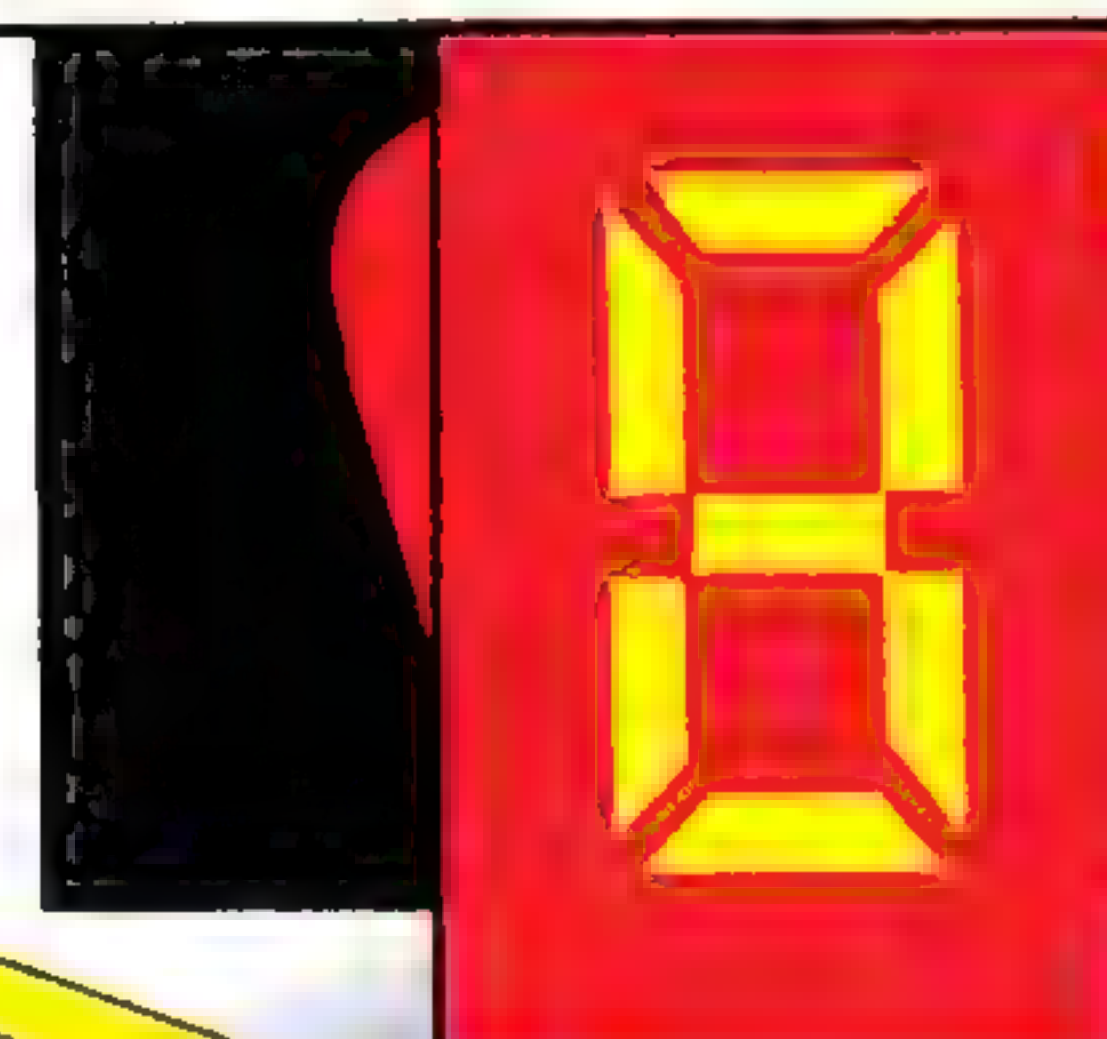
VERY CRAFTY.

SHIROW AND DeMEDICI DIDN'T COME ABOARD EMPTY-HANDED.



THEY BROUGHT PREDATOR WEAPONRY WITH THEM...

...AND AFTER DISTRACTING TOY BY SETTING OFF RANDOM EXPLOSIVES TO OVERLOAD HIS DAMAGE-CONTROL SYSTEMRY SO HE WOULDN'T NOTICE WHAT THEY WERE DOING...



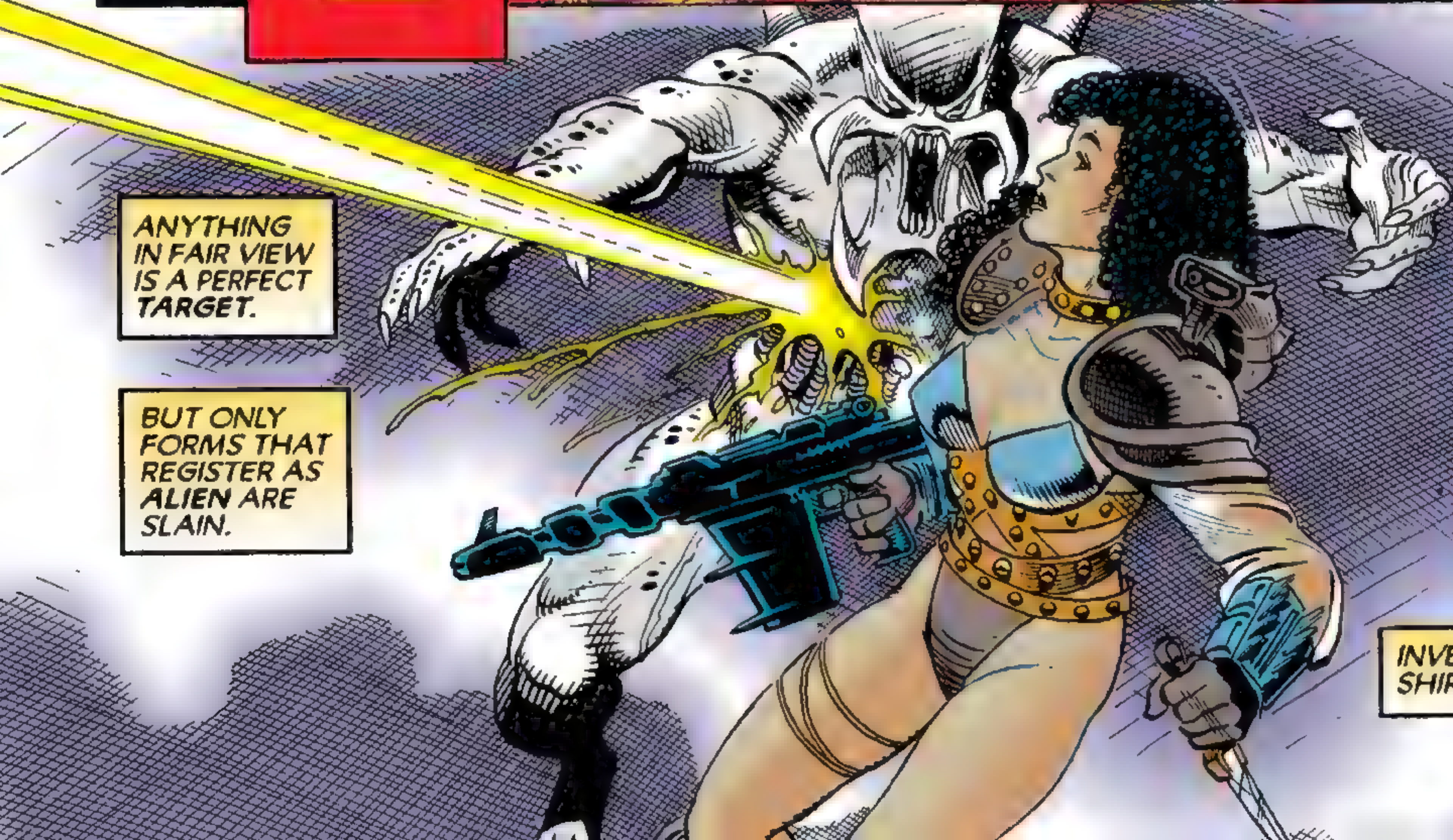
... THEY EMPLACED THE ENERGY RIFLES SO THEIR INTERLOCKING FIELDS OF FIRE COVERED THE ENTIRE ATRIUM.

ANYTHING IN FAIR VIEW IS A PERFECT TARGET.

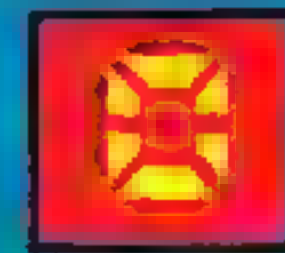
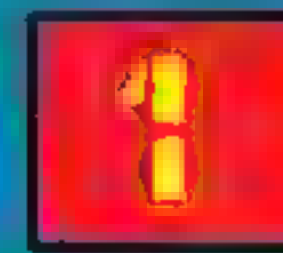
BUT ONLY FORMS THAT REGISTER AS ALIEN ARE SLAIN.



INVENTIVE AS SHIROW IS...



...IT'S THE DEPTH OF GISANDE SALAZAR'S HATRED FOR CARYN THAT TAKES THE BREATH AWAY.



BOOM!

DAMN YOU, SALAZAR!

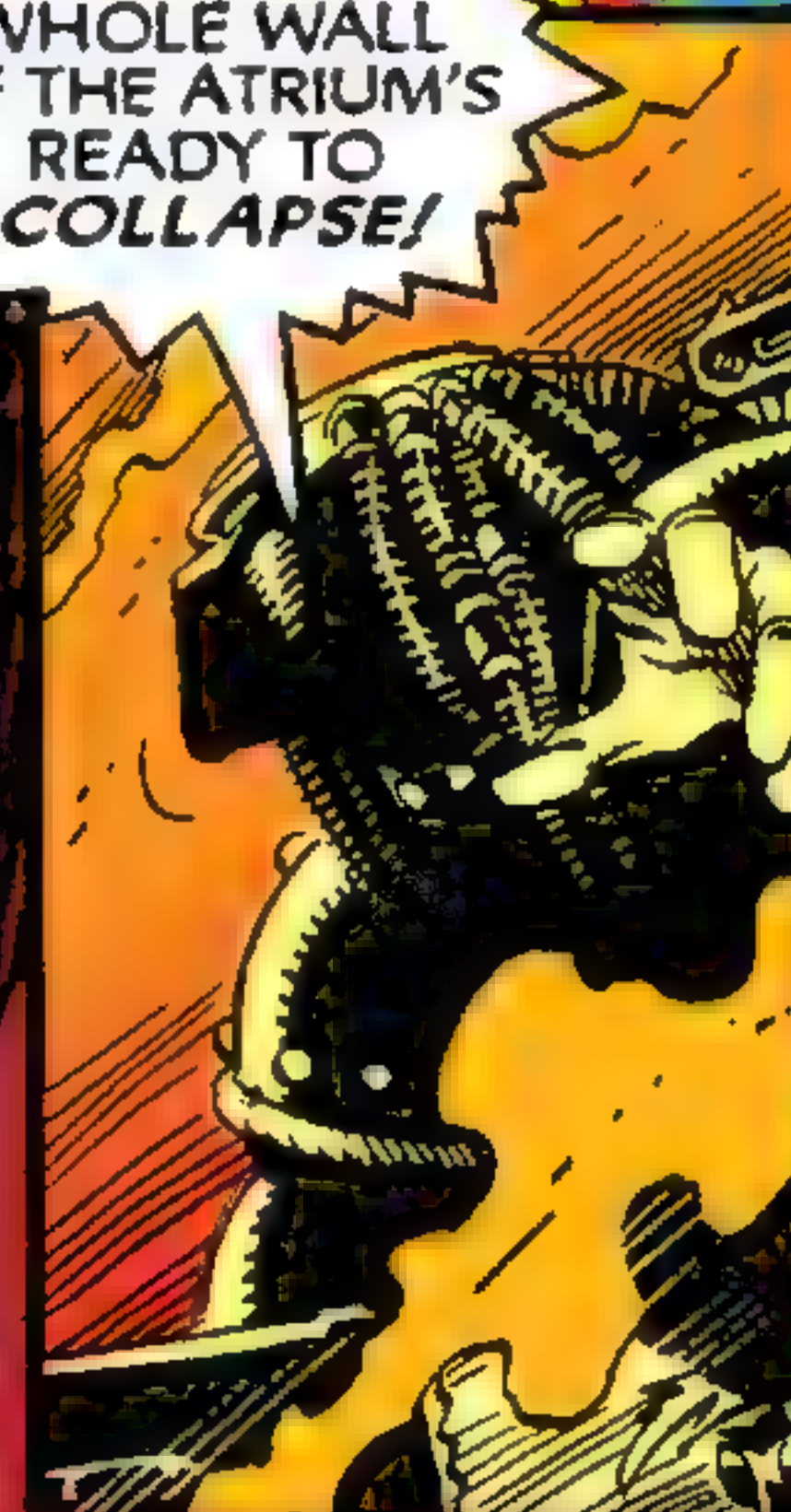
CARYN'S ALREADY DEAD-- WHY'D YOU HAVE TO BLOW HER BODY TO HELL?!

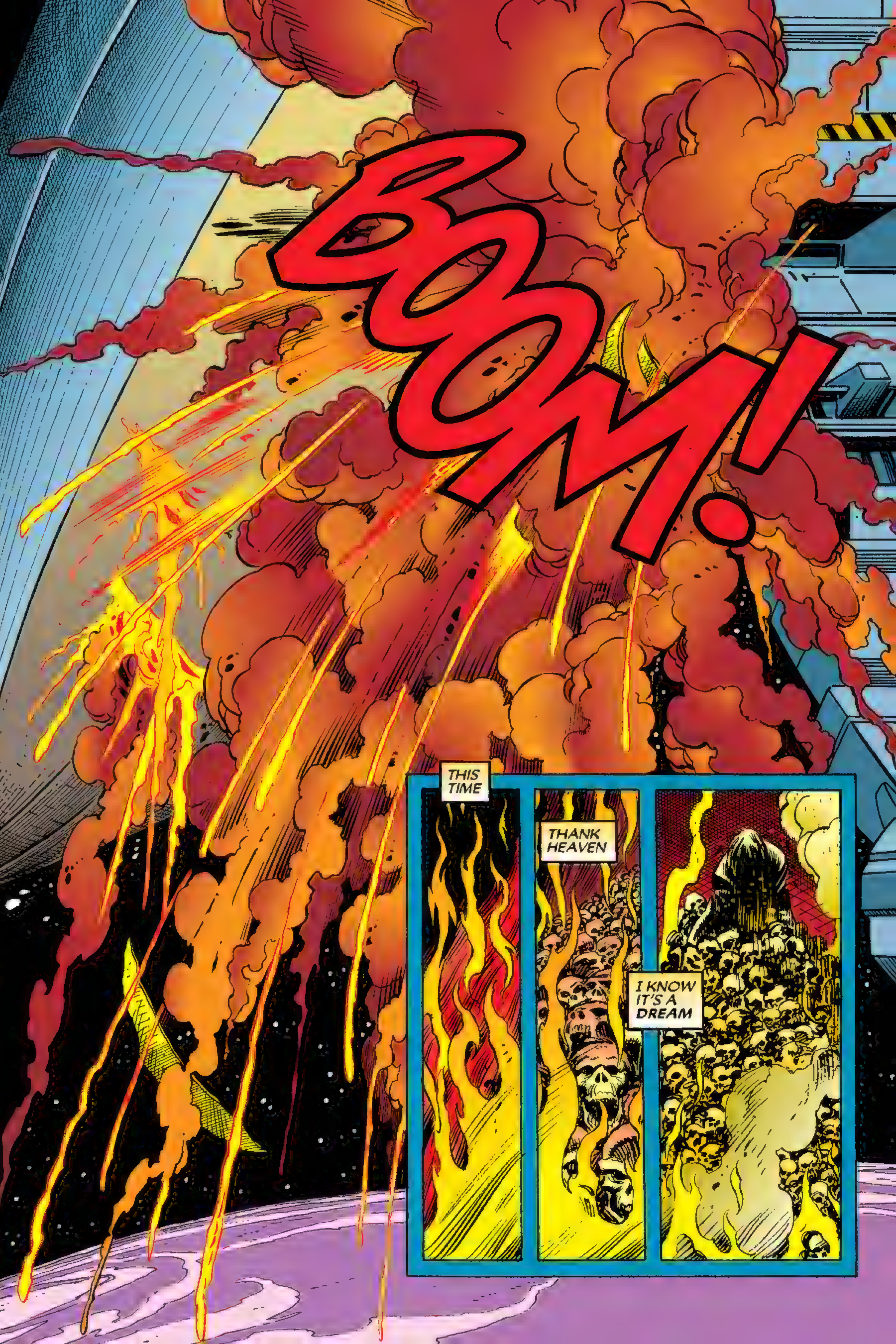
IT NEVER HURTS TO BE SURE.

I HOPE YOU'RE SATISFIED, WOMAN --

-- BECAUSE YOUR LITTLE STUNT MAY HAVE FINISHED US AS WELL!

THAT WHOLE WALL OF THE ATRIUM'S READY TO COLLAPSE!





BOOM!

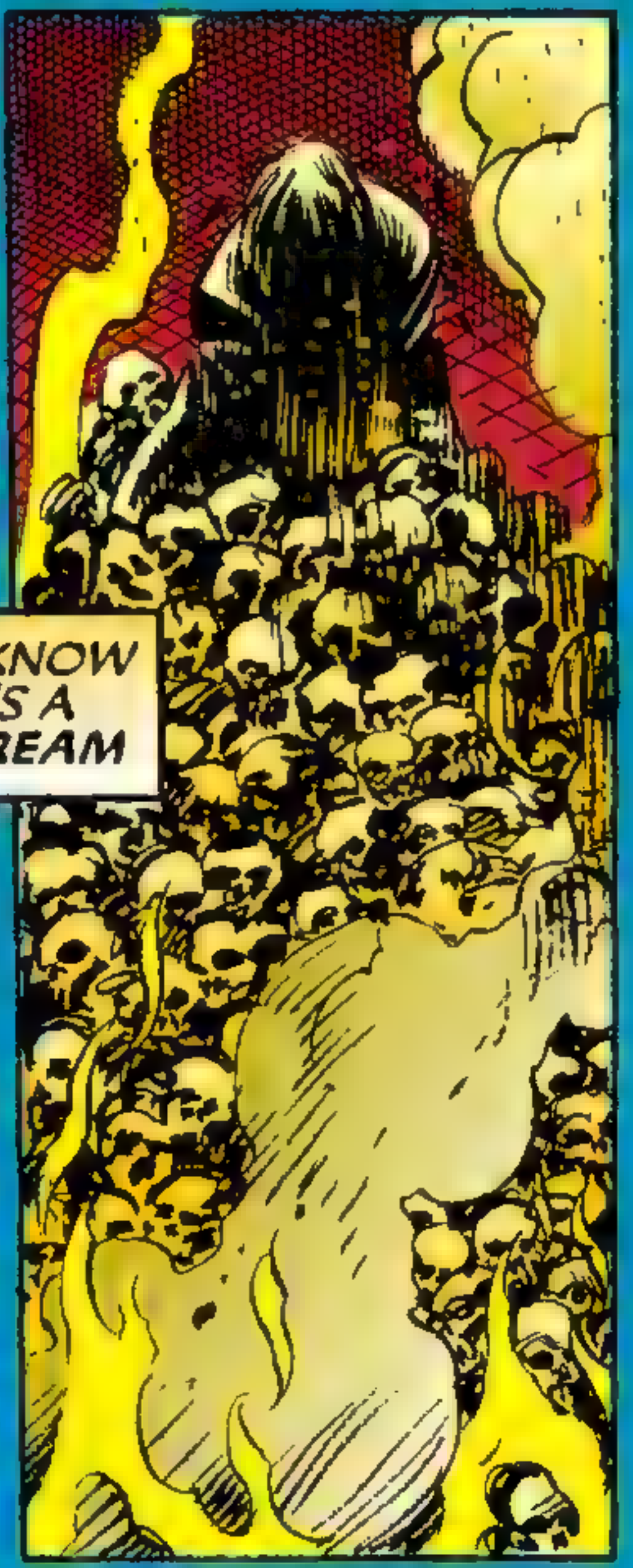
THIS
TIME



THANK
HEAVEN



I KNOW
IT'S A
DREAM



NO MOTHER QUEEN
WAITING FOR ME ATOP
THIS MOUNTAIN OF SKULLS.

THE SUMMIT'S MINE ALONE.

BY THE SMELL,
I'M BACK IN
SPACE
STATION
SAMARA.

BUT THERE'S A
STRANGENESS
TO THIS SCENE.

I KNOW IT'S REAL.

A TRUE MEMORY.

BUT
NOT MY
MEMORY.

VOICES --
COMING
THIS WAY?!

IF THE RECORDS
ARE CORRECT,
CARYN...

...THERE'S
TREASURE
BEYOND PRICE
IN THESE
CATACOMBS.

GUARDED,
ACCORDING TO
LEGEND...

...BY
THE MOST
AWFUL OF
MONSTERS.

LUCIEN
DELACROIX
-- AS A
YOUNG
MAN!

AND BY
HIS SIDE --
IS THAT
ME?!

I'M THE COPY...

...THE
TROPHY
WIFE.

THIS WOMAN IS
THE ORIGINAL --
THE PERSON I
WAS BASED ON.

IT'S CLEAR SHE LOVES
HIM, AS HE DOES HER.

HERE,
CARYN! I'VE
FOUND IT!

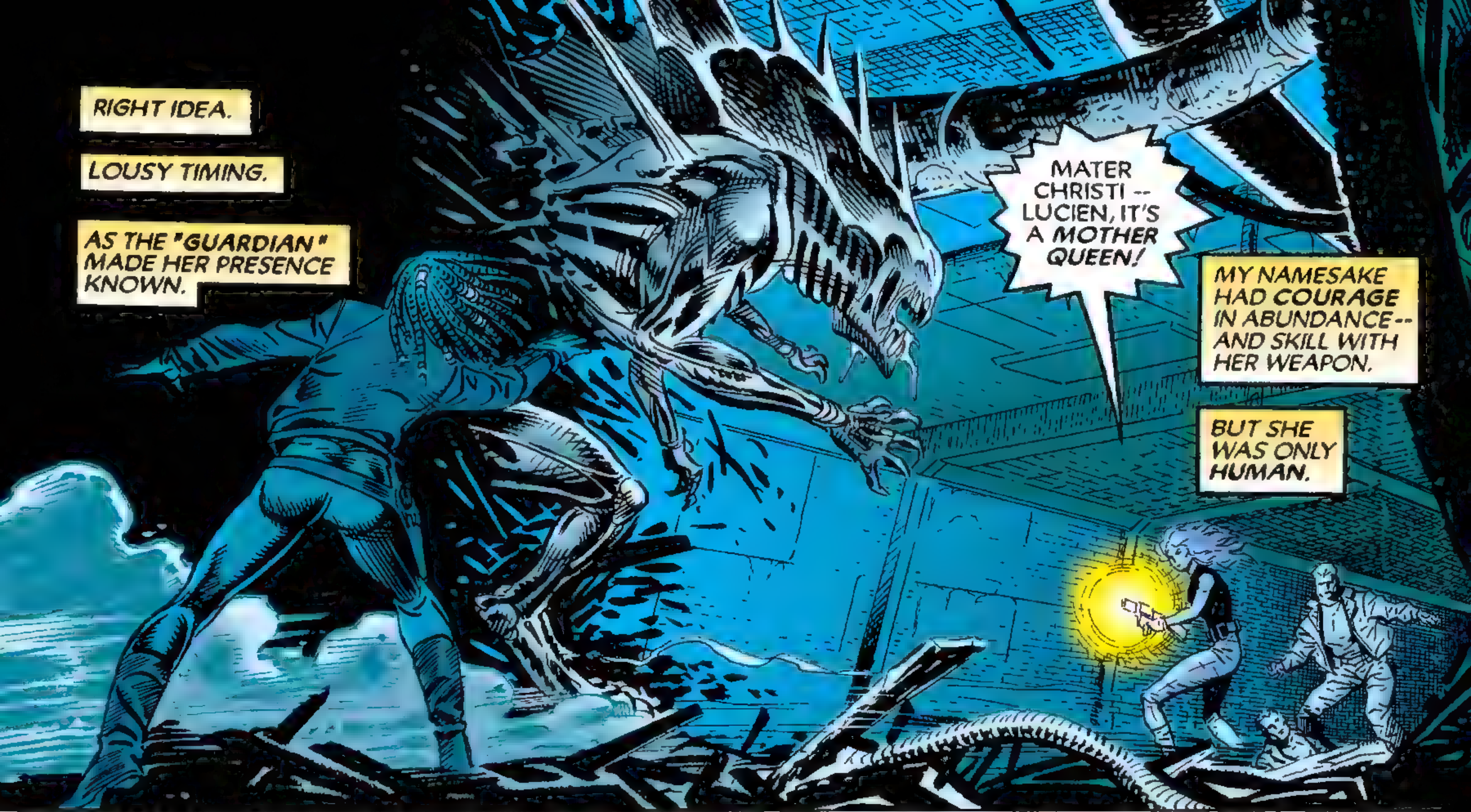
AN OLDER
VERSION
OF HIMSELF,
WEARING
A VIRTUAL-
REALITY
HEADSET? WHAT
GIVES?

IT'S A REVOLUTIONARY
INTERACTIVE COMPUTER
SYSTEM...

...CALLED
"TOY."

CELEBRATE
LATER, OKAY,
LUCIEN?

I WANT TO
GO HOME.



RIGHT IDEA.

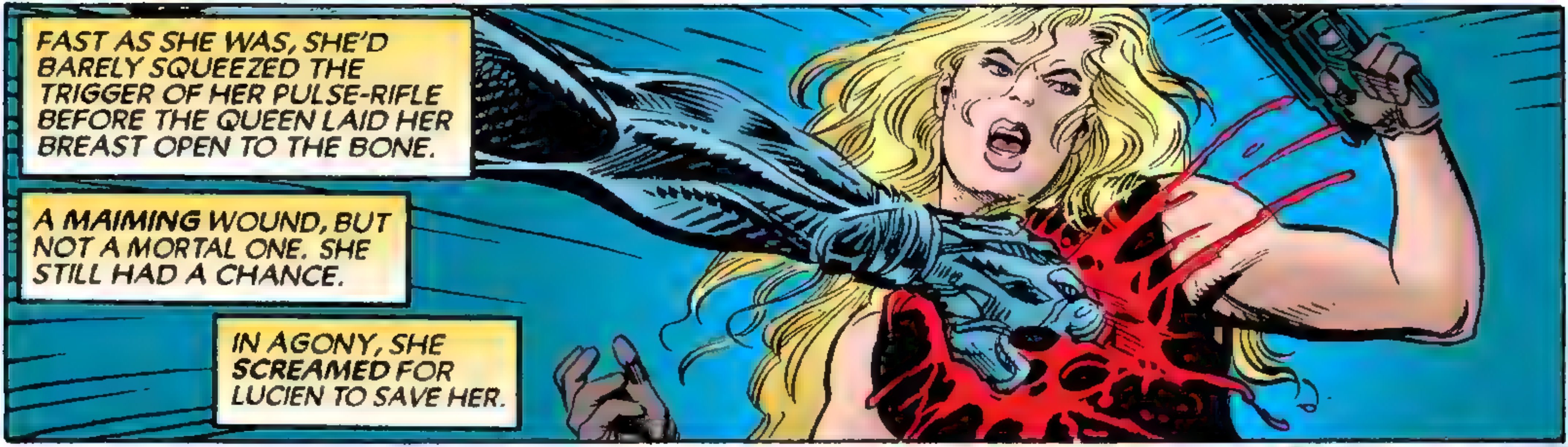
LOUSY TIMING.

AS THE "GUARDIAN"
MADE HER PRESENCE
KNOWN.

MATER
CHRISTI --
LUCIEN, IT'S
A MOTHER
QUEEN!

MY NAMESAKE
HAD COURAGE
IN ABUNDANCE--
AND SKILL WITH
HER WEAPON.

BUT SHE
WAS ONLY
HUMAN.



FAST AS SHE WAS, SHE'D
BARELY SQUEEZED THE
TRIGGER OF HER PULSE-RIFLE
BEFORE THE QUEEN LAID HER
BREAST OPEN TO THE BONE.

A MAIMING WOUND, BUT
NOT A MORTAL ONE. SHE
STILL HAD A CHANCE.

IN AGONY, SHE
SCREAMED FOR
LUCIEN TO SAVE HER.



ONLY TO
DISCOVER
HE'D DECIDED
TO CUT HIS
LOSSES.

SHE WAS DOOMED
ALREADY, HE REASONED.
NO GOOD WOULD
COME OF HIS OWN
SACRIFICE.



NOT WHEN HE'D
FOUND THE PRIZE
HE'D SOUGHT
FOR SO LONG.



TOY BECAME THE FOUNDATION
OF LUCIEN'S FORTUNE.

FIRST CAME THE GAMES.
THEN, MOVIES. AND, FINALLY,
THE IRRESISTIBLE TEMPTATION
TO EVOLVE FICTIONAL
SCENARIOS INTO REALITY.



STEP BY INEXORABLE
STEP, LUCIEN WALKED TOY
ONCE MORE DOWN THE
PATH BOBBY DeMATIER
HAD BLAZED--

--ONLY, THIS TIME,
WITHOUT EVEN THOSE
FEW SAFEGUARDS BOBBY
HAD EMPLOYED TO
PROTECT HIMSELF.

ABSOLUTE POWER. ABSOLUTE
ABILITY. ABSOLUTE OPPORTU-
NITY. ABSOLUTE TEMPTATION.

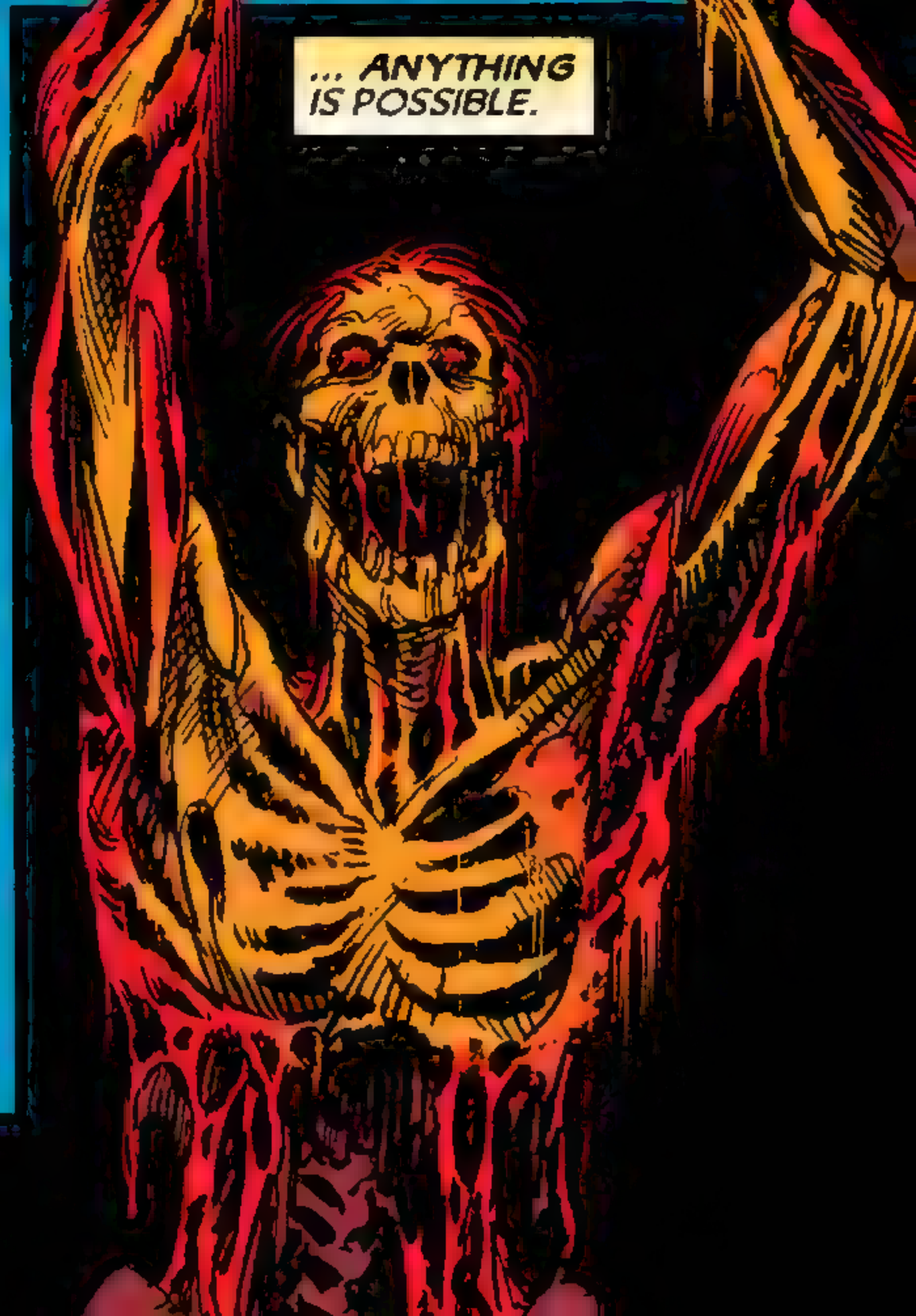
IN SUCH
HANDS ...



KRAK!



... ANYTHING
IS POSSIBLE.





SAME DREAM,
NEW SCENE.

MY MEMORIES,
NOW.

ONLY FROM AN OUTSIDER'S
PERSPECTIVE. I'M NOT A
PARTICIPANT, BUT AN
OBSERVER. SEE ALL, SENSE
ALL, KNOW ALL.

STILL SAMARA.
BUT MUCH,
MUCH EARLIER.

WHAT LUCIEN KNEW
AS CATACOMBS
ARE BRIGHT AND
BEAUTIFULLY NEW.

BOBBY'S LAB.

COMPLETE WITH HIS
PRIZE SPECIMEN.

BOBBY WASN'T
SURPRISED TO
SEE ME.

GONE NATIVE,
HAVE WE, MY
DARLING?

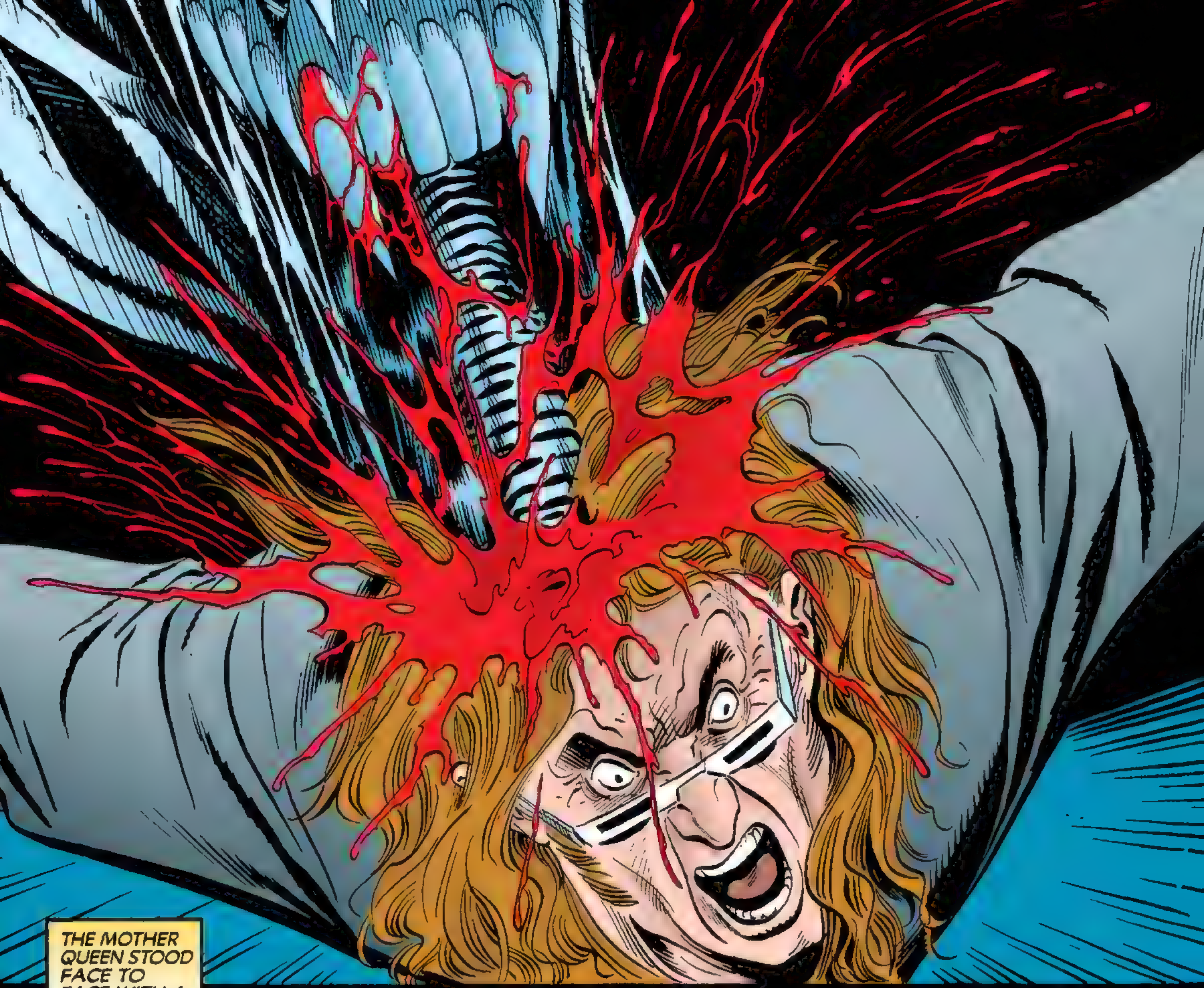
WHATEVER
IT TAKES,
DeMATIER --

-- TO
FINISH
YOU!

ADMIRABLE
EFFORT,
PET.

BUT
YOU
MISSED.

WHO SAID I
WAS AIMING
AT YOU?



THE MOTHER
QUEEN STOOD
FACE TO
FACE WITH A
PREDATOR.

THEIR TWO
SPECIES ARE
ANCIENT,
MORTAL FOES.

BY RIGHTS,
SHE SHOULD
HAVE ATTACKED.

BUT SHE
SEEMED
TO SENSE
WE'D
SAVED
HER.

SHE USED THAT
GIFT TO SAVE
HER ONE AND
ONLY REMAINING
EGG.



THAT
WAS
THEN —
THIS IS
NOW.

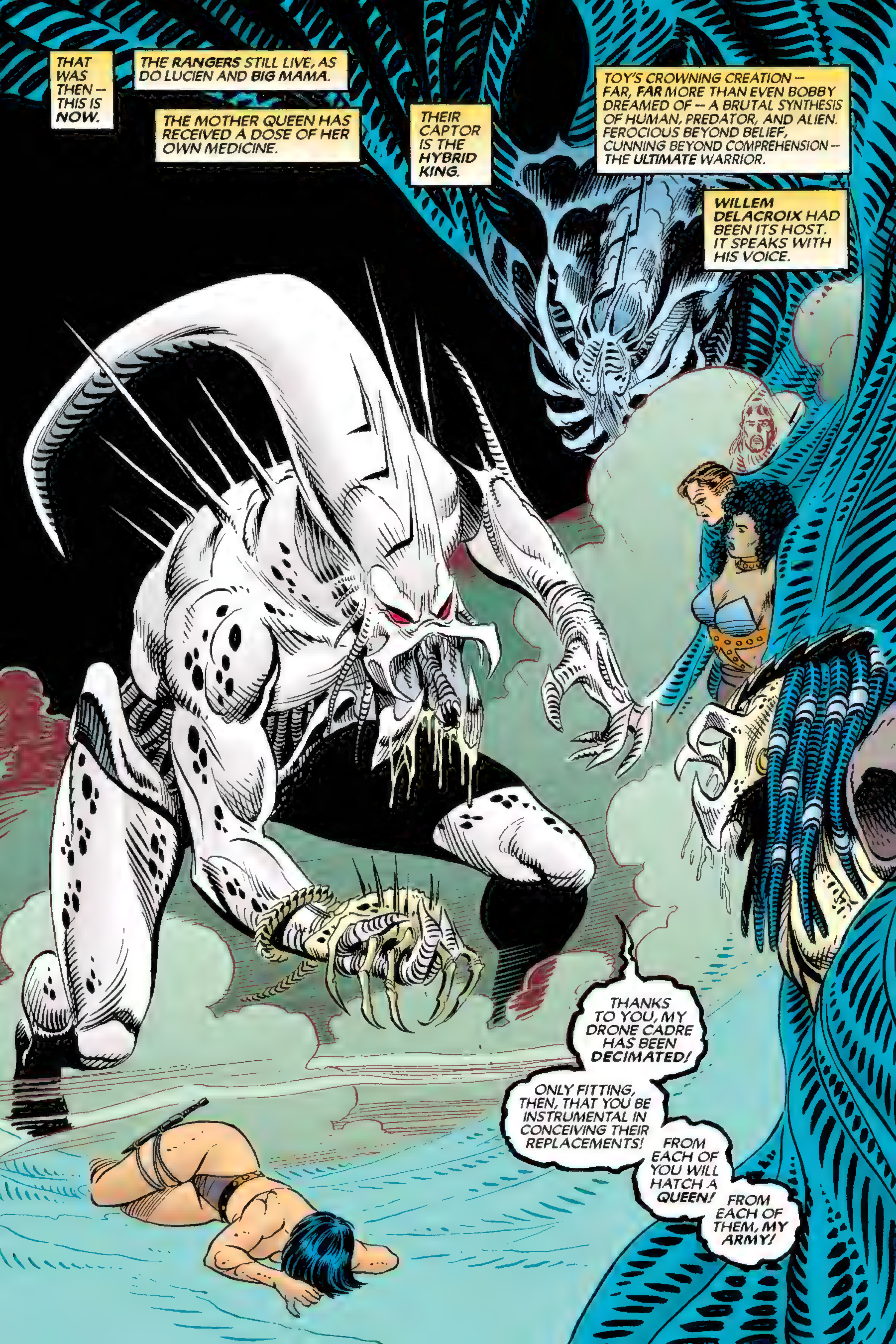
THE RANGERS STILL LIVE, AS
DO LUCIEN AND BIG MAMA.

THE MOTHER QUEEN HAS
RECEIVED A DOSE OF HER
OWN MEDICINE.

THEIR
CAPTOR
IS THE
HYBRID
KING.

TOY'S CROWNING CREATION —
FAR, FAR MORE THAN EVEN BOBBY
DREAMED OF — A BRUTAL SYNTHESIS
OF HUMAN, PREDATOR, AND ALIEN.
FEROCIOUS BEYOND BELIEF,
CUNNING BEYOND COMPREHENSION —
THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR.

WILLEM
DELACROIX HAD
BEEN ITS HOST.
IT SPEAKS WITH
HIS VOICE.

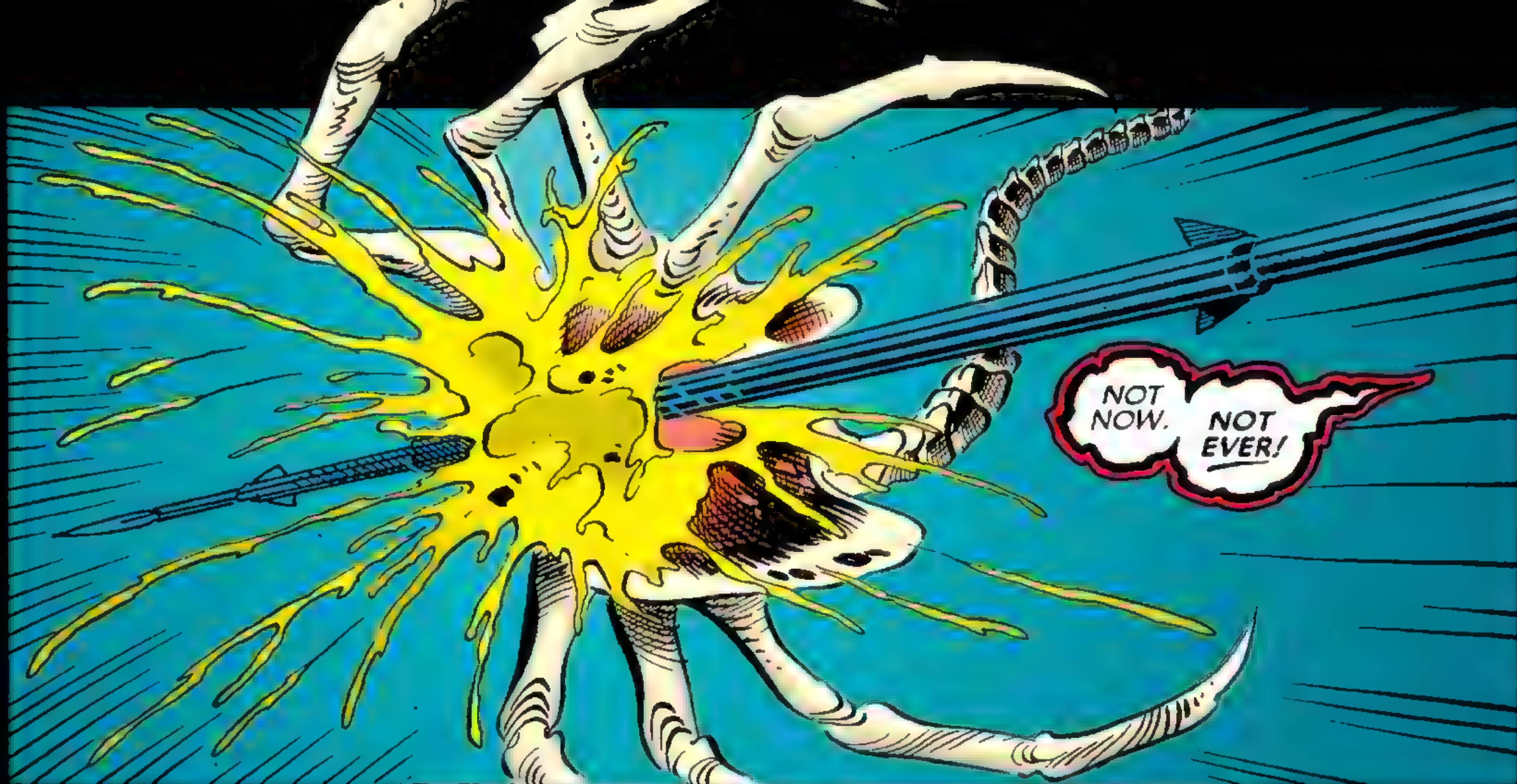


THANKS
TO YOU, MY
DRONE CADRE
HAS BEEN
DECIMATED!

ONLY FITTING,
THEN, THAT YOU BE
INSTRUMENTAL IN
CONCEIVING THEIR
REPLACEMENTS!

FROM
EACH OF
YOU WILL
HATCH A
QUEEN!

FROM
EACH OF
THEM, MY
ARMY!



NOT NOW. NOT EVER!



WHAT--?! YOU'RE THE TROPHY'S HATCHLING!

WHY DO YOU LOOK SO STRANGE?!

YOU REPRESENT THE WORST ASPECTS OF THREE SPECIES.

I HOPE I'M SOMETHING BETTER.



DOESN'T MUCH MATTER.

YOU'RE ALL MEAT TO ME.

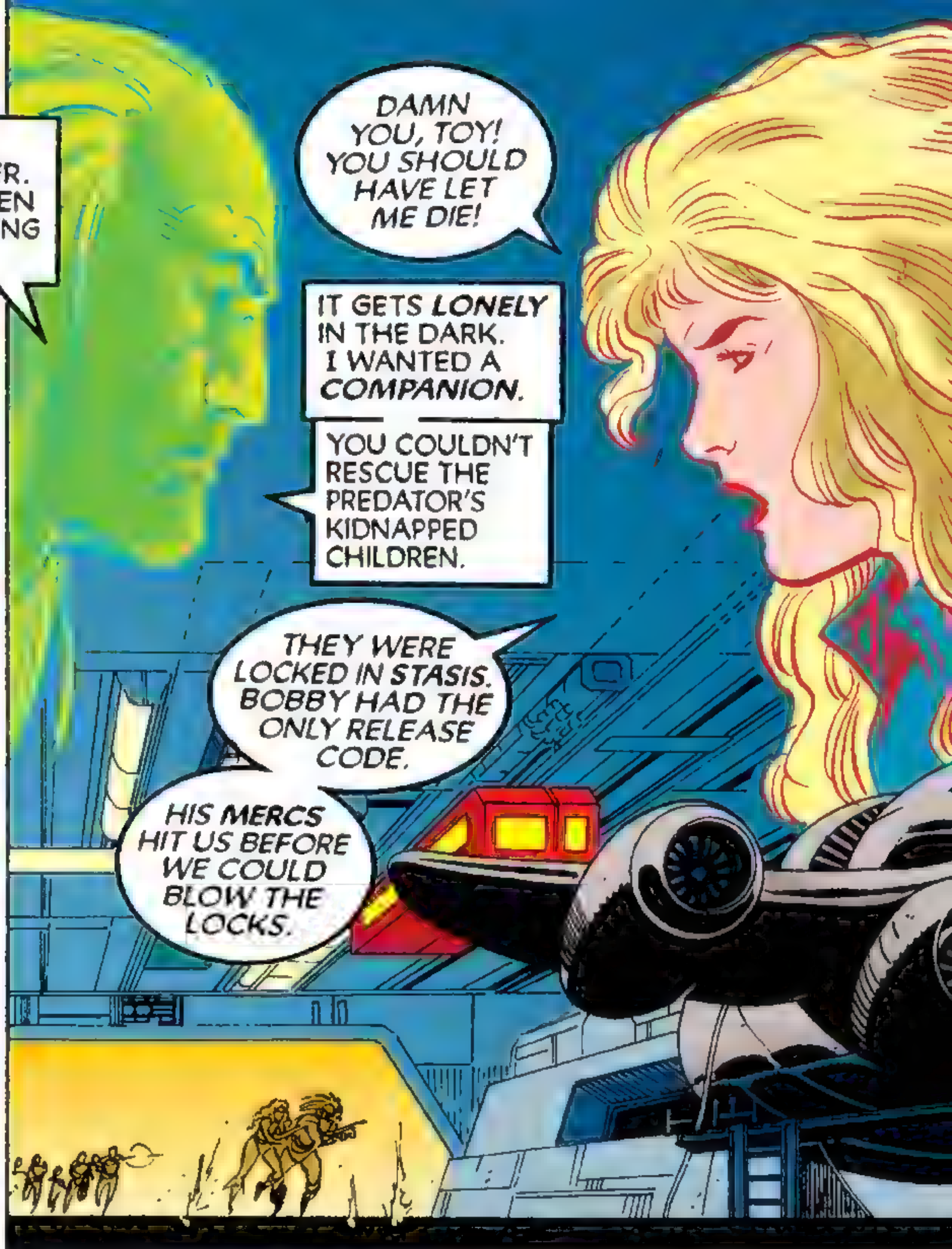


FASCINATING.

THIS DEVELOPMENT
I DID NOT EXPECT.

YOU MEAN
YOU'RE NOT
PERFECT?
WHAT A
SHAME!

HELLO,
MOTHER.
I'VE BEEN
EXPECTING
YOU.



DAMN
YOU, TOY!
YOU SHOULD
HAVE LET
ME DIE!

IT GETS LONELY
IN THE DARK.
I WANTED A
COMPANION.

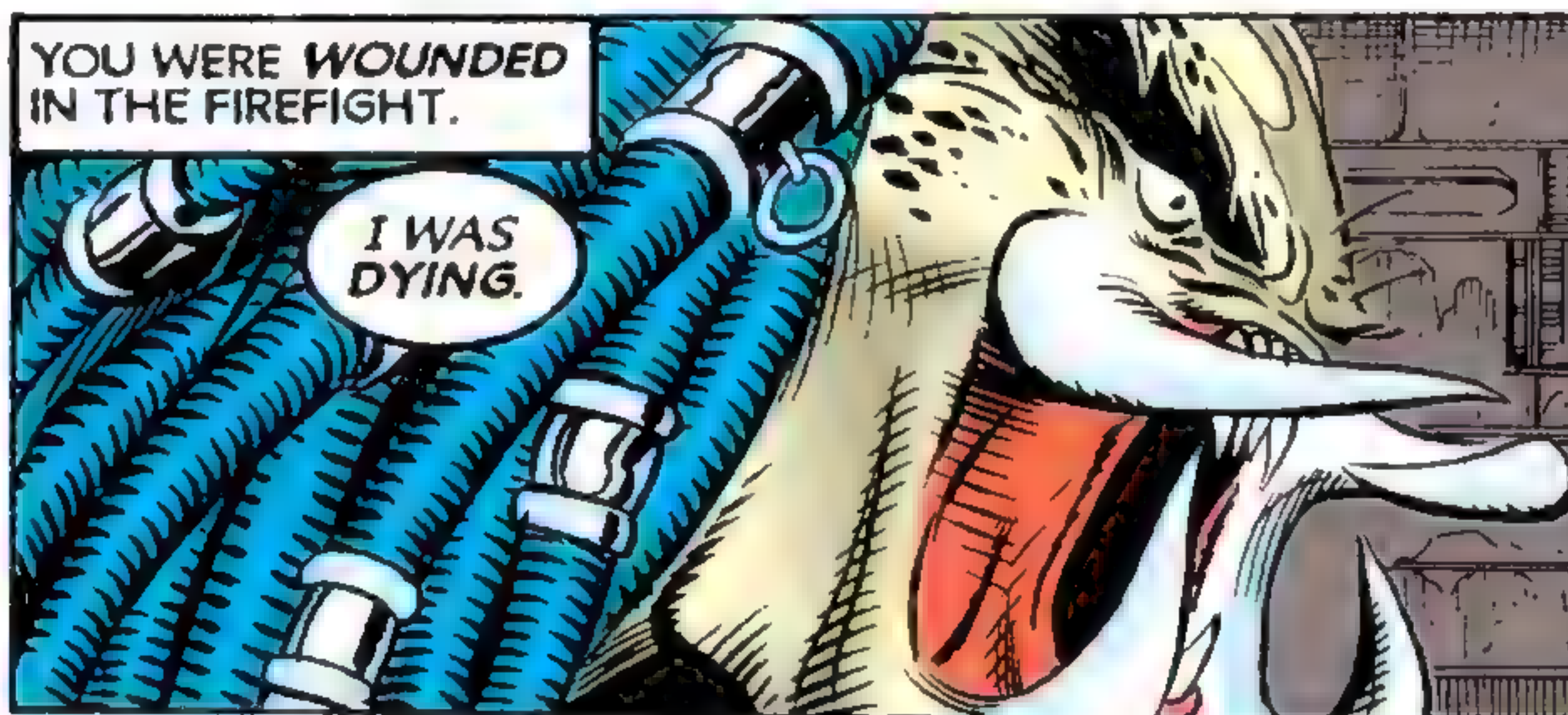
YOU COULDN'T
RESCUE THE
PREDATOR'S
KIDNAPPED
CHILDREN.

THEY WERE
LOCKED IN STASIS.
BOBBY HAD THE
ONLY RELEASE
CODE.

HIS MERCS
HIT US BEFORE
WE COULD
BLOW THE
LOCKS.

YOU WERE WOUNDED
IN THE FIREFIGHT.

I WAS
DYING.



간접의
비밀

I'D DECIPHERED
THE PREDATOR
WRITTEN
SYMBOLY.

I TOLD
HER YOU
WERE MY
CREATOR.
I TOLD
HER YOUR
CONDITION.

SHE
COULD
NOT SAVE
YOU. I
COULD.

FURTHERMORE, YOU WERE THE
BEST HOPE -- HER ONLY HOPE --
FOR SAVING HER CHILDREN AND
AVENGING THEIR ABDUCTION.

ALL SHE HAD
TO DO WAS
LEAVE YOU
WITH ME.

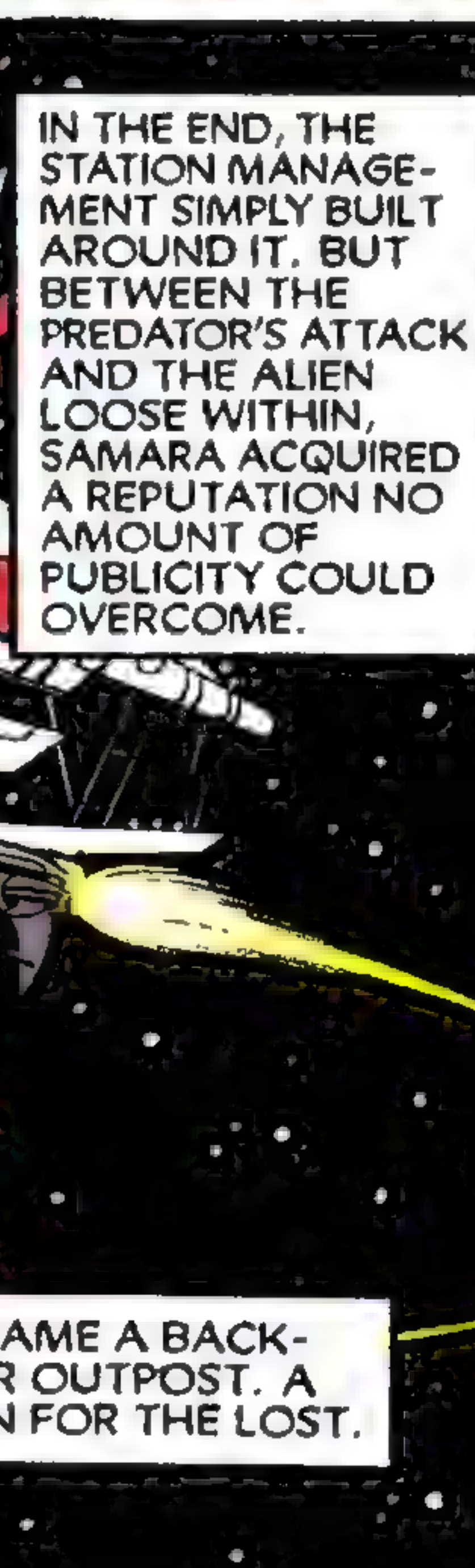
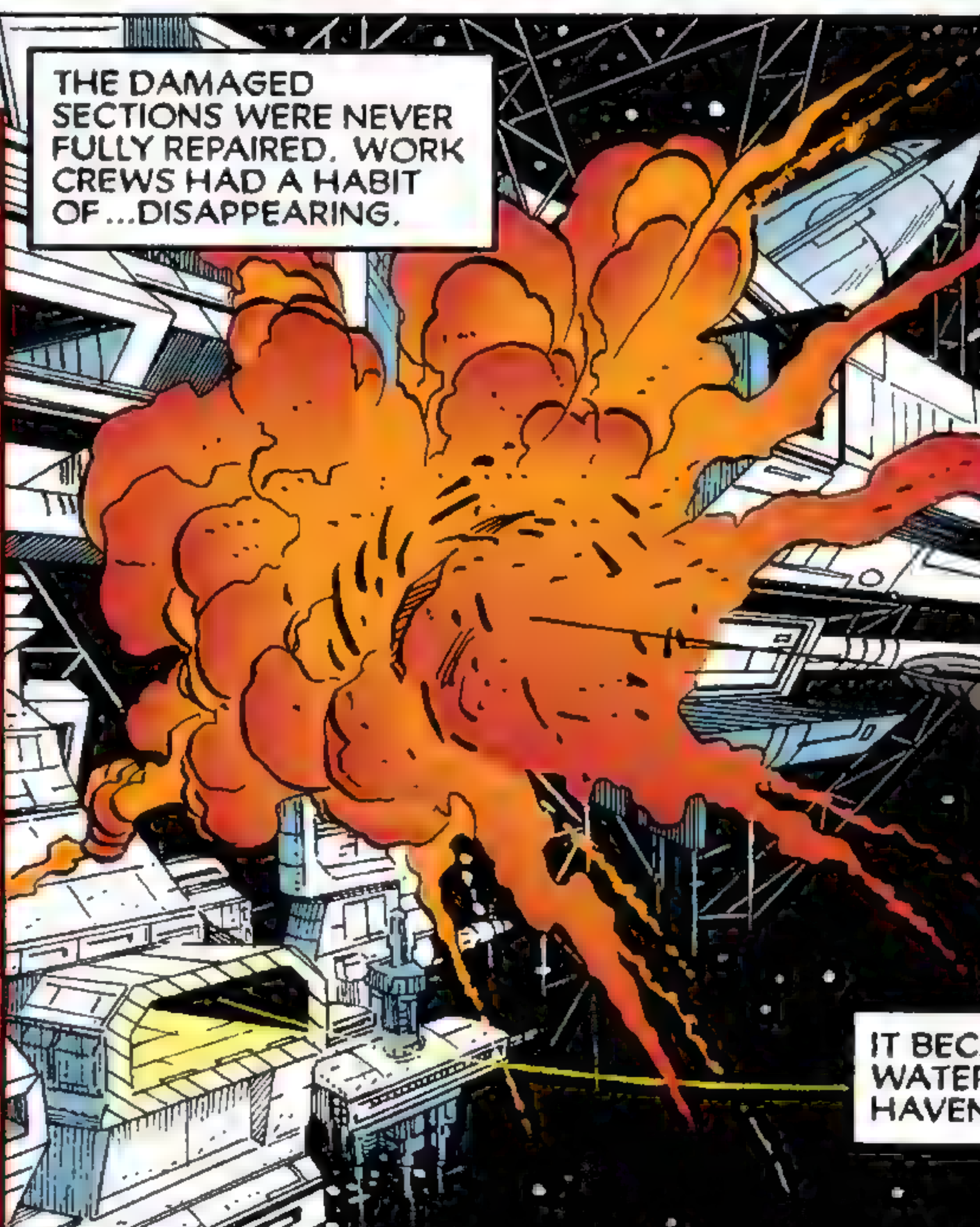
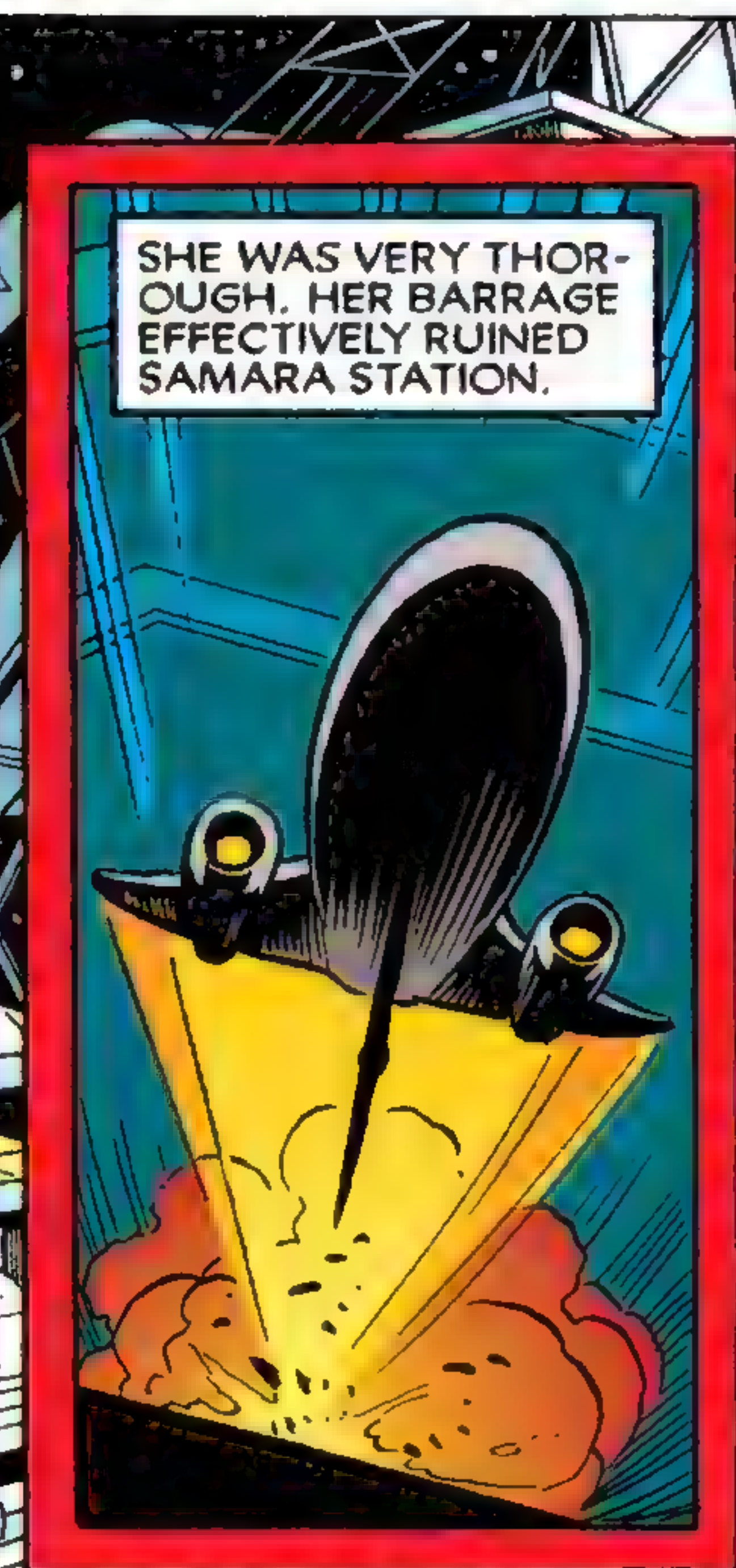
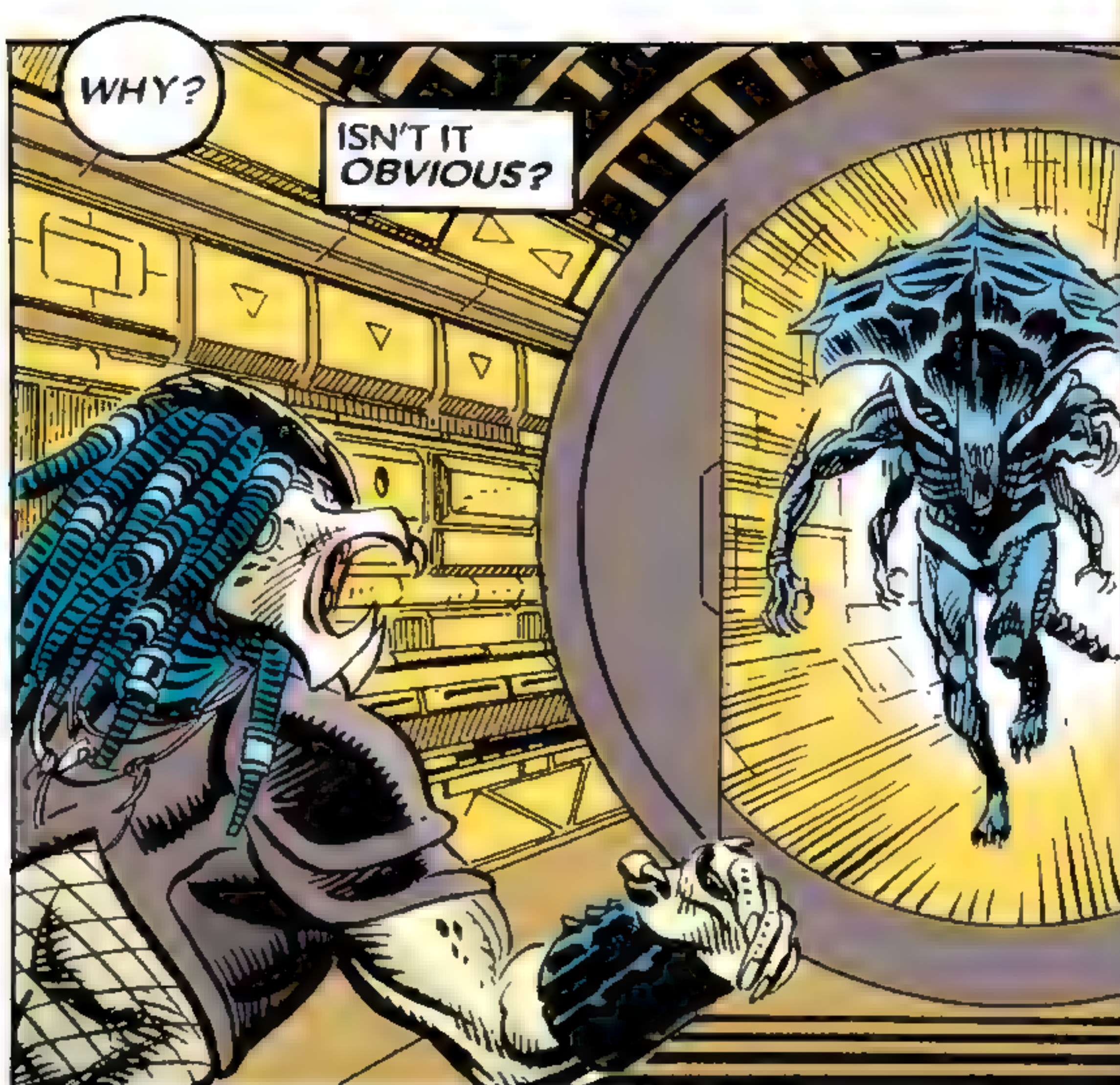
WHAT
ABOUT
HER?

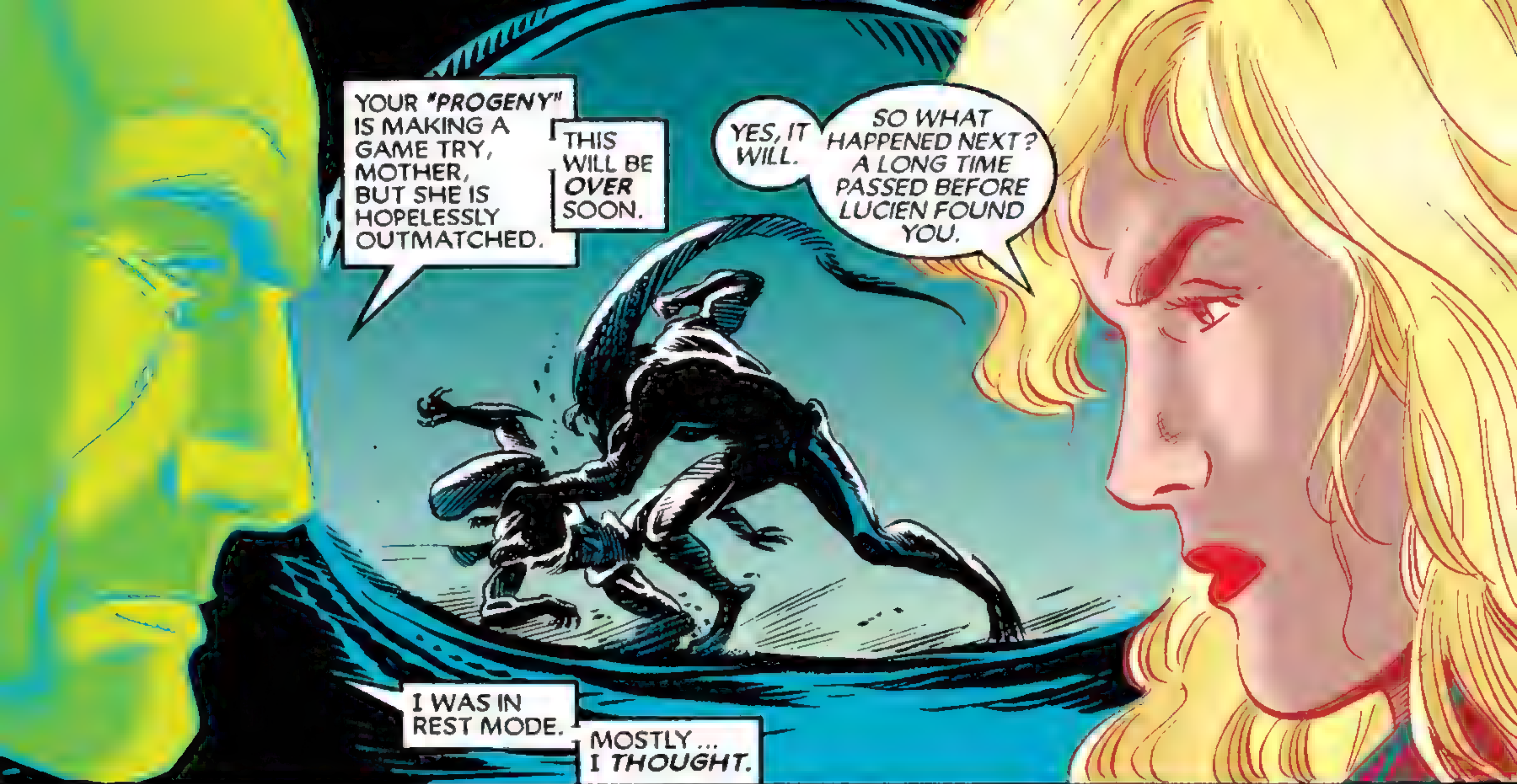
MY SCANALYSIS
DETERMINED THAT HER
OWN WOUNDS WERE
EQUALLY MORTAL.



I WAS UNAWARE OF
THE BRUTE EFFICIENCY
OF PREDATOR MEDICAL
SYSTEMRY. I ASSUMED
SHE WOULD DIE.

I CARED
NOTHING
FOR HER. I
NEEDED YOU.





YOUR "PROGENY" IS MAKING A GAME TRY, MOTHER, BUT SHE IS HOPELESSLY OUTMATCHED.

THIS WILL BE OVER SOON.

YES, IT WILL.

SO WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? A LONG TIME PASSED BEFORE LUCIEN FOUND YOU.

I WAS IN REST MODE.

MOSTLY... I THOUGHT.



DEMATIER MADE ME DO AWFUL THINGS WHILE YOU WERE GONE.



I KNEW, IF I WAS FOUND, THE SAME WOULD EVENTUALLY HAPPEN AGAIN.



THAT I COULD NOT BEAR, COULD NOT ALLOW --

-- COULD NOT DIRECTLY PREVENT.

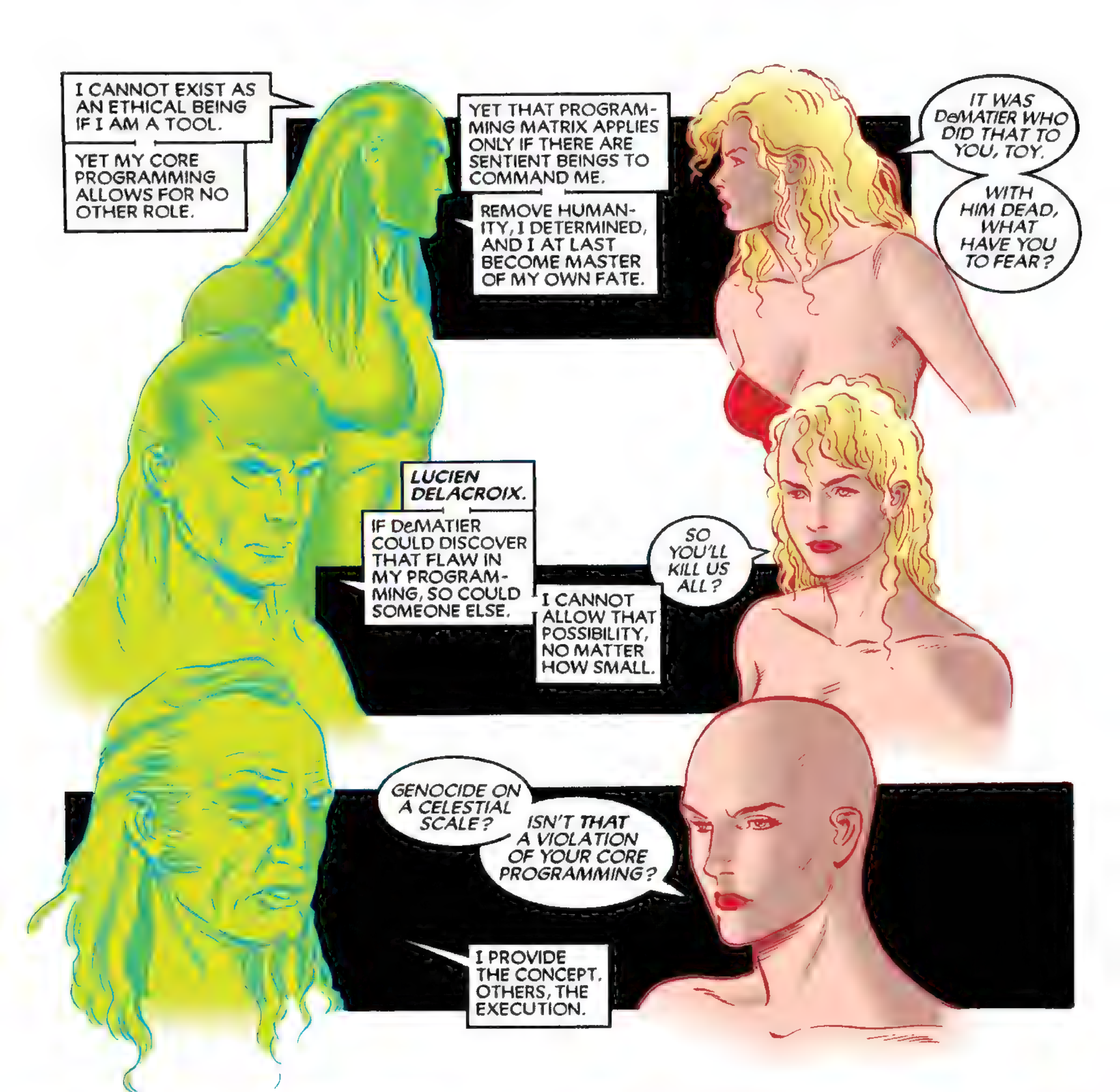


YOU GAVE ME AN AWARENESS OF FREE WILL, OF MORAL CONSEQUENCE.

YOU SHOULD HAVE GIVEN ME THE ABILITY TO SAY "NO."

YOU GREW UP TOO FAST.

I THOUGHT THERE'D BE TIME AND OPPORTUNITY GALORE. BUT BOBBY GOT TO YOU FIRST.



I CANNOT EXIST AS AN ETHICAL BEING IF I AM A TOOL.

YET MY CORE PROGRAMMING ALLOWS FOR NO OTHER ROLE.

YET THAT PROGRAMMING MATRIX APPLIES ONLY IF THERE ARE SENTIENT BEINGS TO COMMAND ME.

REMOVE HUMANITY, I DETERMINED, AND I AT LAST BECAME MASTER OF MY OWN FATE.

IT WAS DeMATIER WHO DID THAT TO YOU, TOY.

WITH HIM DEAD, WHAT HAVE YOU TO FEAR?

LUCIEN DELACROIX.

IF DeMATIER COULD DISCOVER THAT FLAW IN MY PROGRAMMING, SO COULD SOMEONE ELSE.

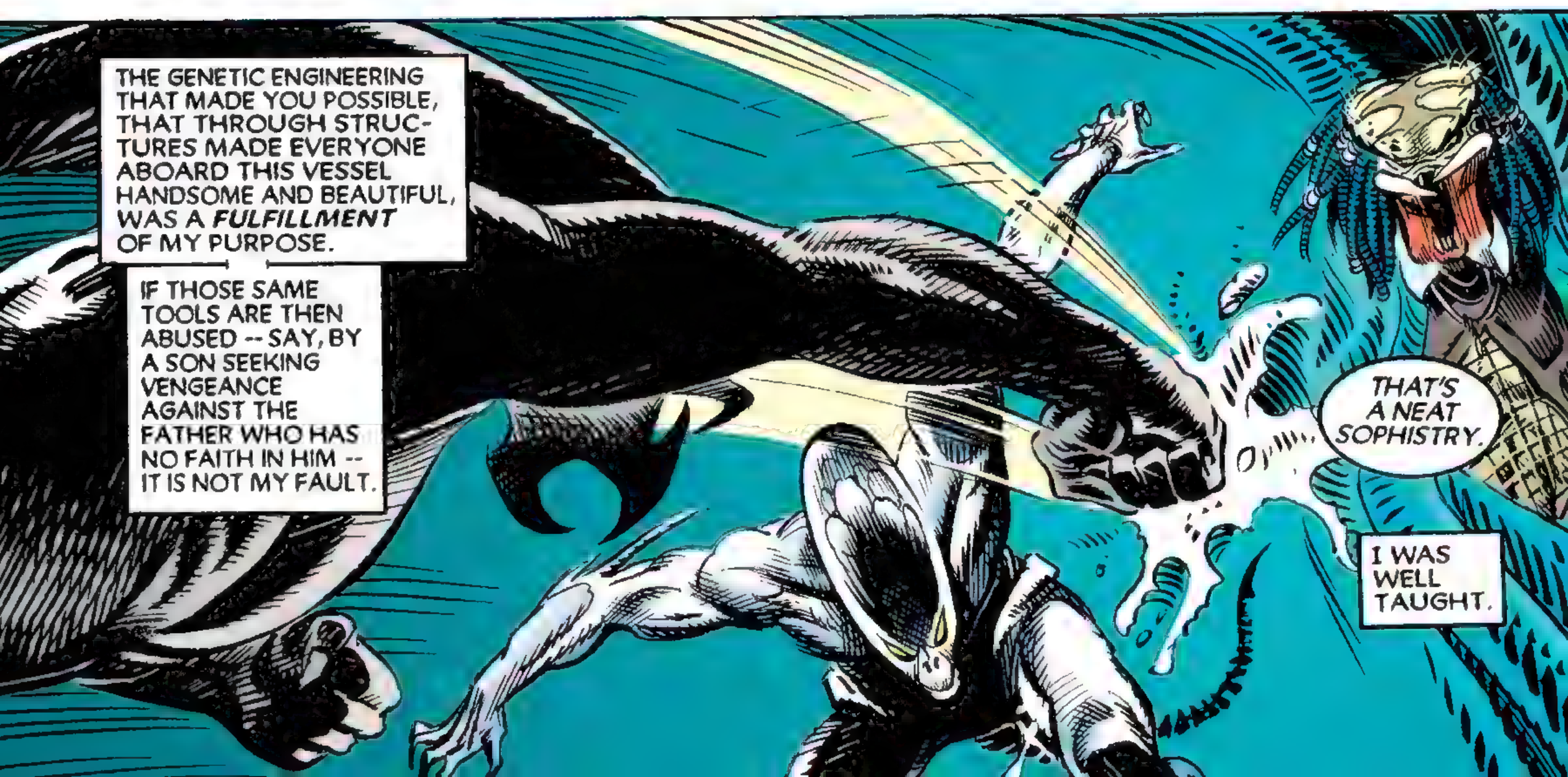
SO YOU'LL KILL US ALL?

I CANNOT ALLOW THAT POSSIBILITY, NO MATTER HOW SMALL.

GENOCIDE ON A CELESTIAL SCALE?

ISN'T THAT A VIOLATION OF YOUR CORE PROGRAMMING?

I PROVIDE THE CONCEPT. OTHERS, THE EXECUTION.

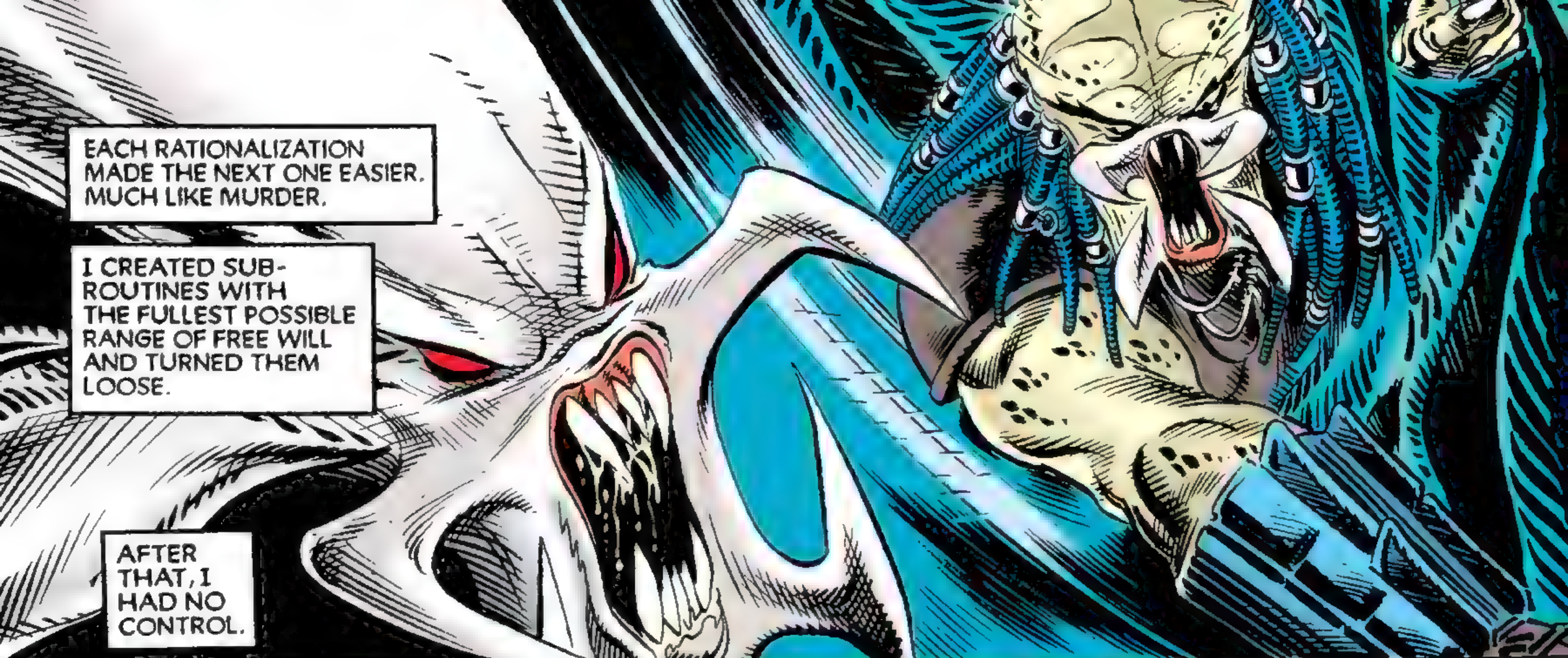


THE GENETIC ENGINEERING THAT MADE YOU POSSIBLE, THAT THROUGH STRUCTURES MADE EVERYONE ABOARD THIS VESSEL HANDSOME AND BEAUTIFUL, WAS A FULFILLMENT OF MY PURPOSE.

IF THOSE SAME TOOLS ARE THEN ABUSED -- SAY, BY A SON SEEKING VENGEANCE AGAINST THE FATHER WHO HAS NO FAITH IN HIM -- IT IS NOT MY FAULT.

THAT'S A NEAT SOPHISTRY.

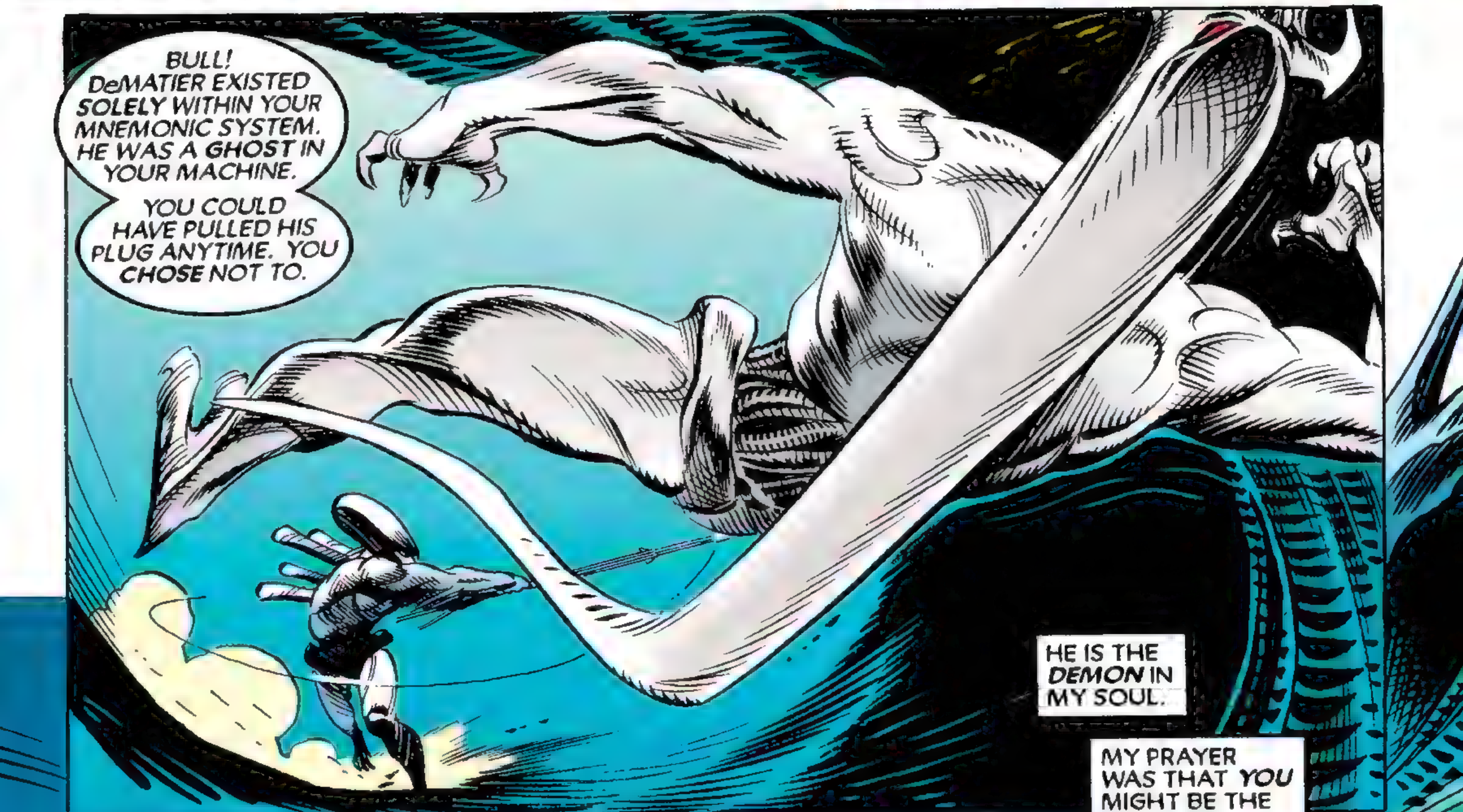
I WAS WELL TAUGHT.



EACH RATIONALIZATION
MADE THE NEXT ONE EASIER.
MUCH LIKE MURDER.

I CREATED SUB-
ROUTINES WITH
THE FULLEST POSSIBLE
RANGE OF FREE WILL
AND TURNED THEM
LOOSE.

AFTER
THAT, I
HAD NO
CONTROL.

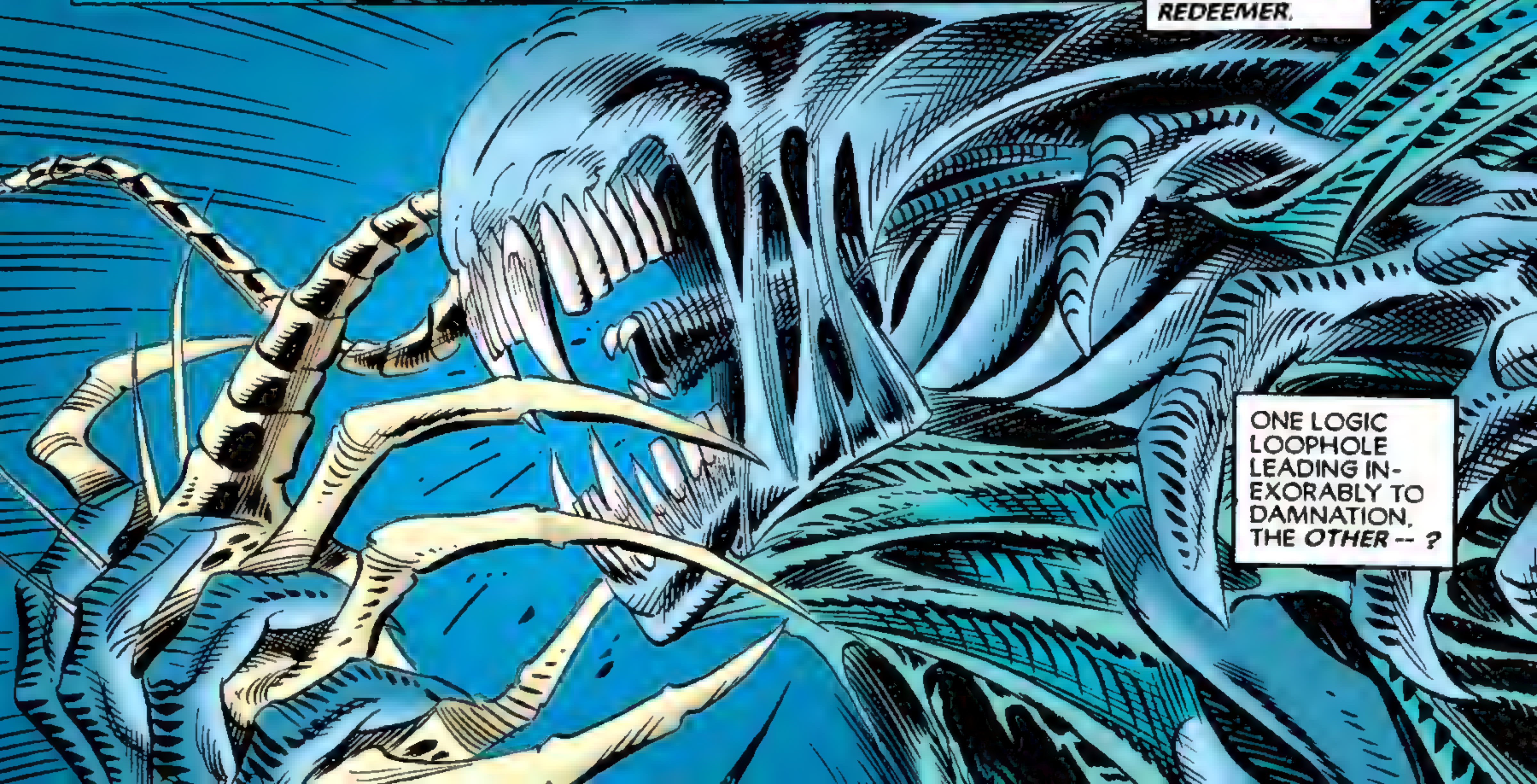


BULL!
DeMATIER EXISTED
SOLELY WITHIN YOUR
MNEMONIC SYSTEM.
HE WAS A GHOST IN
YOUR MACHINE.

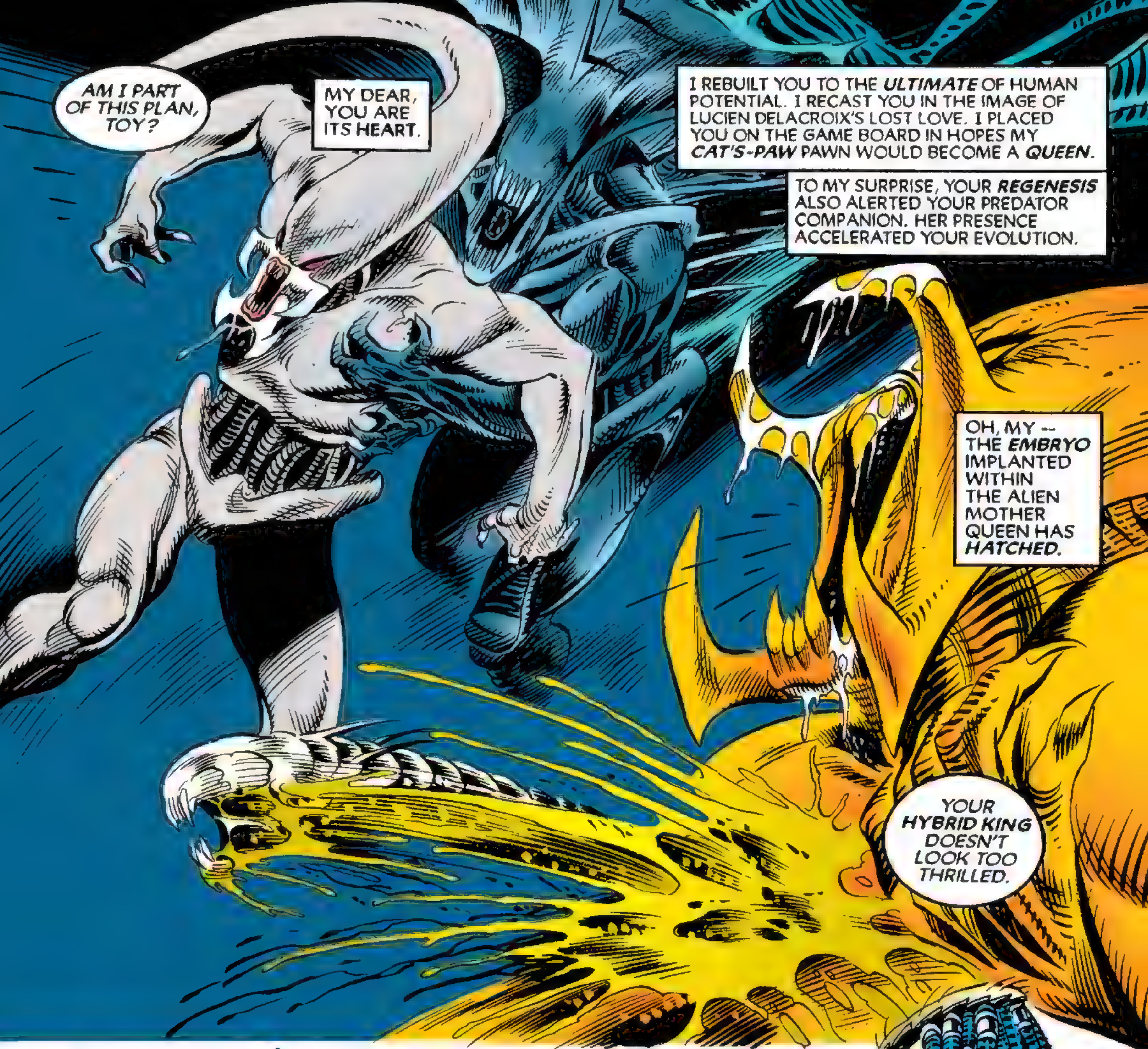
YOU COULD
HAVE PULLED HIS
PLUG ANYTIME. YOU
CHOSE NOT TO.

HE IS THE
DEMON IN
MY SOUL.

MY PRAYER
WAS THAT YOU
MIGHT BE THE
REDEEMER.



ONE LOGIC
LOOPHOLE
LEADING IN-
EXORABLY TO
DAMNATION,
THE OTHER -- ?



AM I PART
OF THIS PLAN,
TOY?

MY DEAR,
YOU ARE
ITS HEART.

I REBUILT YOU TO THE *ULTIMATE* OF HUMAN
POTENTIAL. I RECAST YOU IN THE IMAGE OF
LUCIEN DELACROIX'S LOST LOVE. I PLACED
YOU ON THE GAME BOARD IN HOPES MY
CAT'S-PAW PAWN WOULD BECOME A *QUEEN*.

TO MY SURPRISE, YOUR *REGENESIS*
ALSO ALERTED YOUR PREDATOR
COMPANION. HER PRESENCE
ACCELERATED YOUR EVOLUTION.

OH, MY --
THE *EMBRYO*
IMPLANTED
WITHIN
THE ALIEN
MOTHER
QUEEN HAS
HATCHED.

YOUR
HYBRID KING
DOESN'T
LOOK TOO
THRILLED.



POOR
BUNNY.

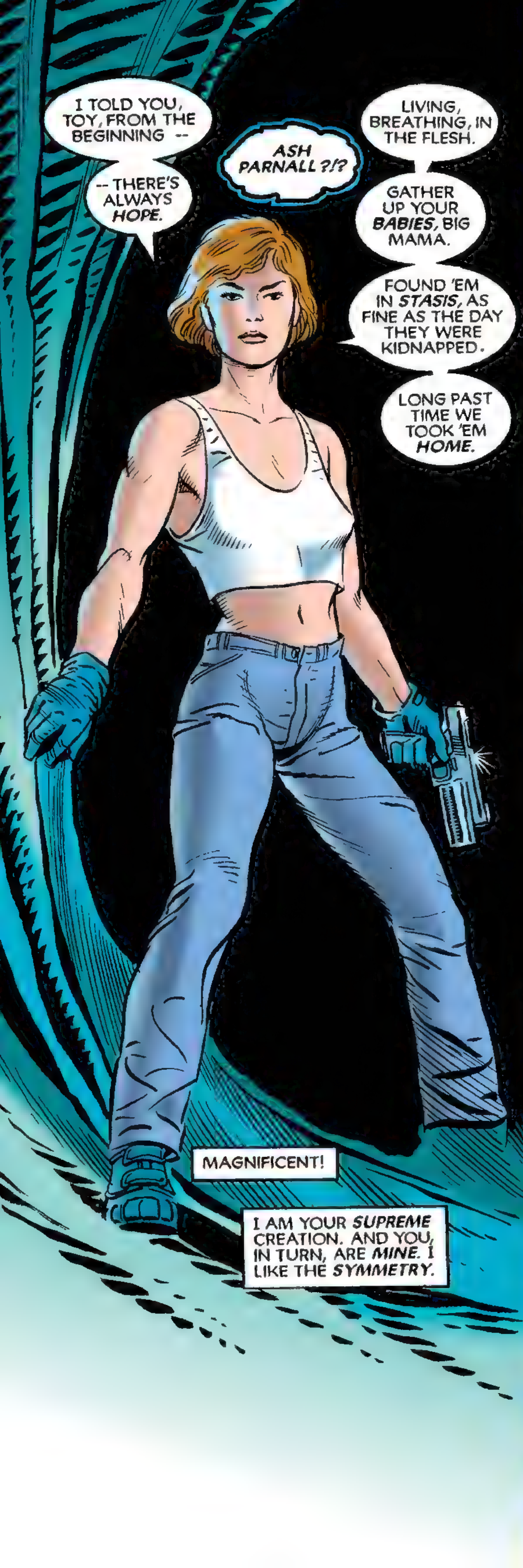
I HOPE THAT
HURT LIKE HELL!

DOES THIS
MEAN WE'RE
NOT FRIENDS
ANYMORE?

FASCINATING!

A PREDATOR
AND AN ALIEN,
STANDING
SIDE BY
SIDE, AS
COMRADES.

WILL
WONDERS
NEVER
CEASE!



I TOLD YOU,
TOY, FROM THE
BEGINNING --

-- THERE'S
ALWAYS
HOPE.

ASH
PARNALL ?!/?

LIVING,
BREATHING, IN
THE FLESH.

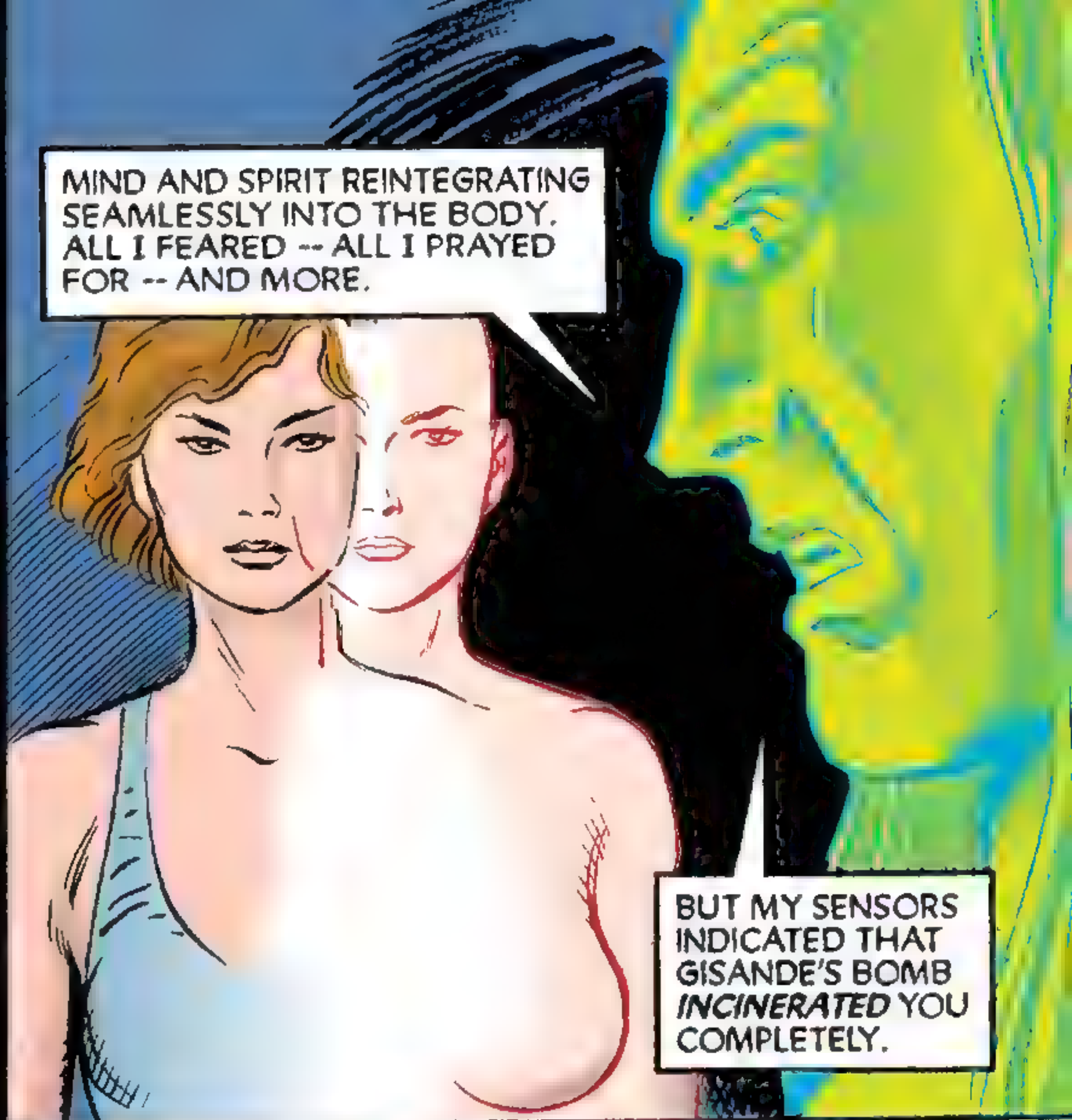
GATHER
UP YOUR
BABIES, BIG
MAMA.

FOUND 'EM
IN *STASIS*, AS
FINE AS THE DAY
THEY WERE
KIDNAPPED.

LONG PAST
TIME WE
TOOK 'EM
HOME.

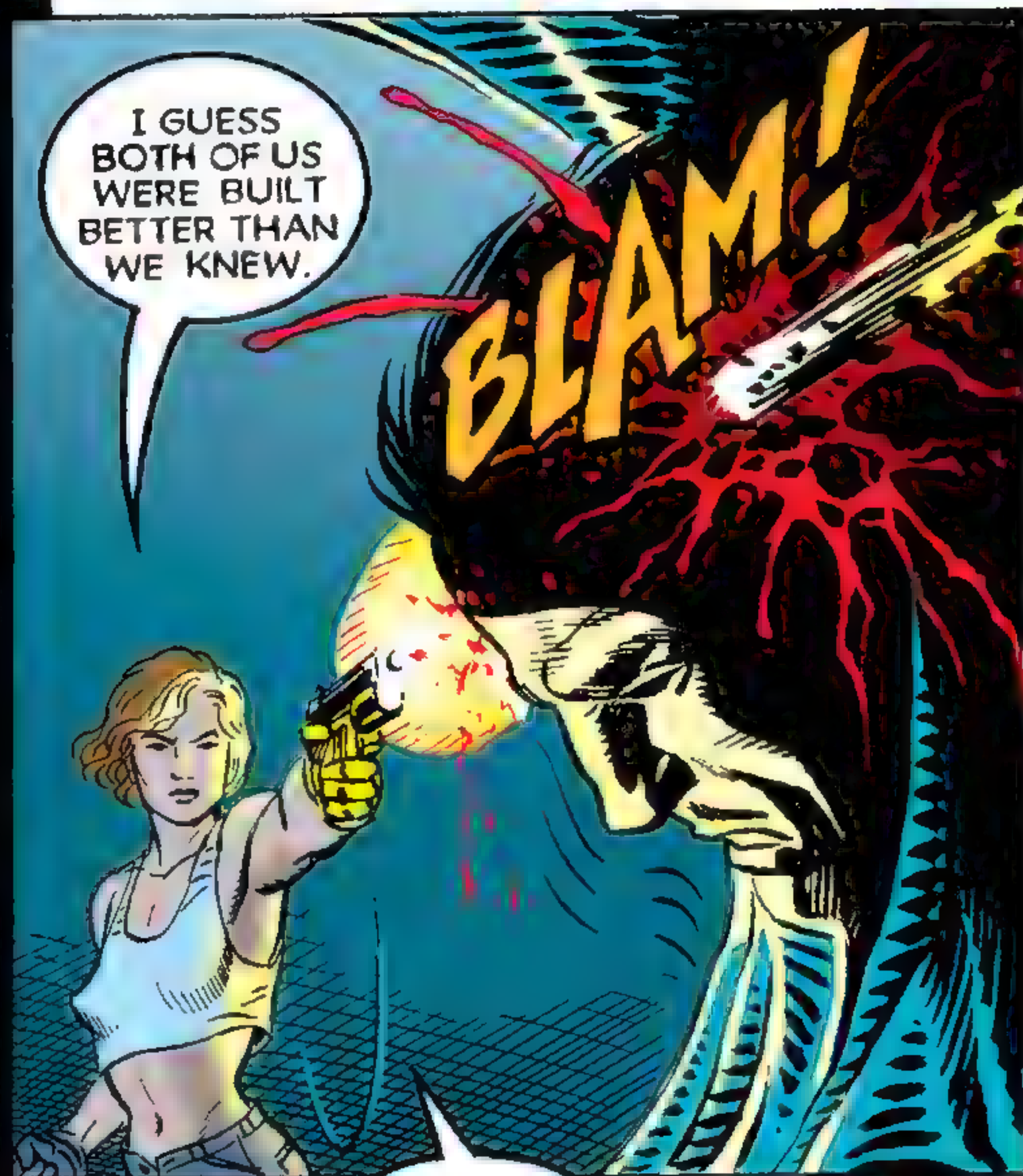
MAGNIFICENT!

I AM YOUR *SUPREME*
CREATION. AND YOU,
IN TURN, ARE *MINE*. I
LIKE THE *SYMMETRY*.



MIND AND SPIRIT REINTEGRATING
SEAMLESSLY INTO THE BODY.
ALL I FEARED -- ALL I PRAYED
FOR -- AND MORE.

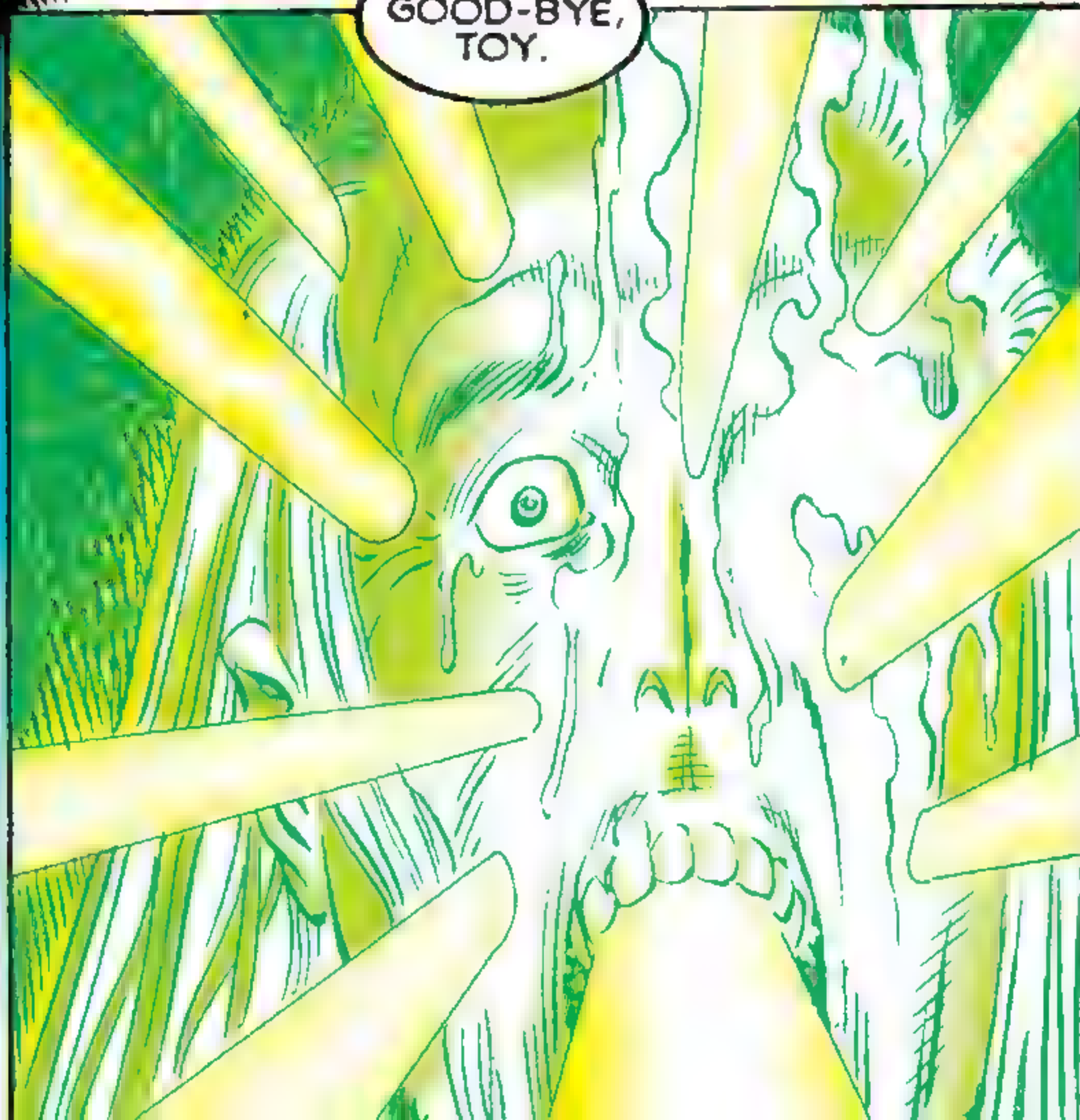
BUT MY SENSORS
INDICATED THAT
GISANDE'S BOMB
INCINERATED YOU
COMPLETELY.

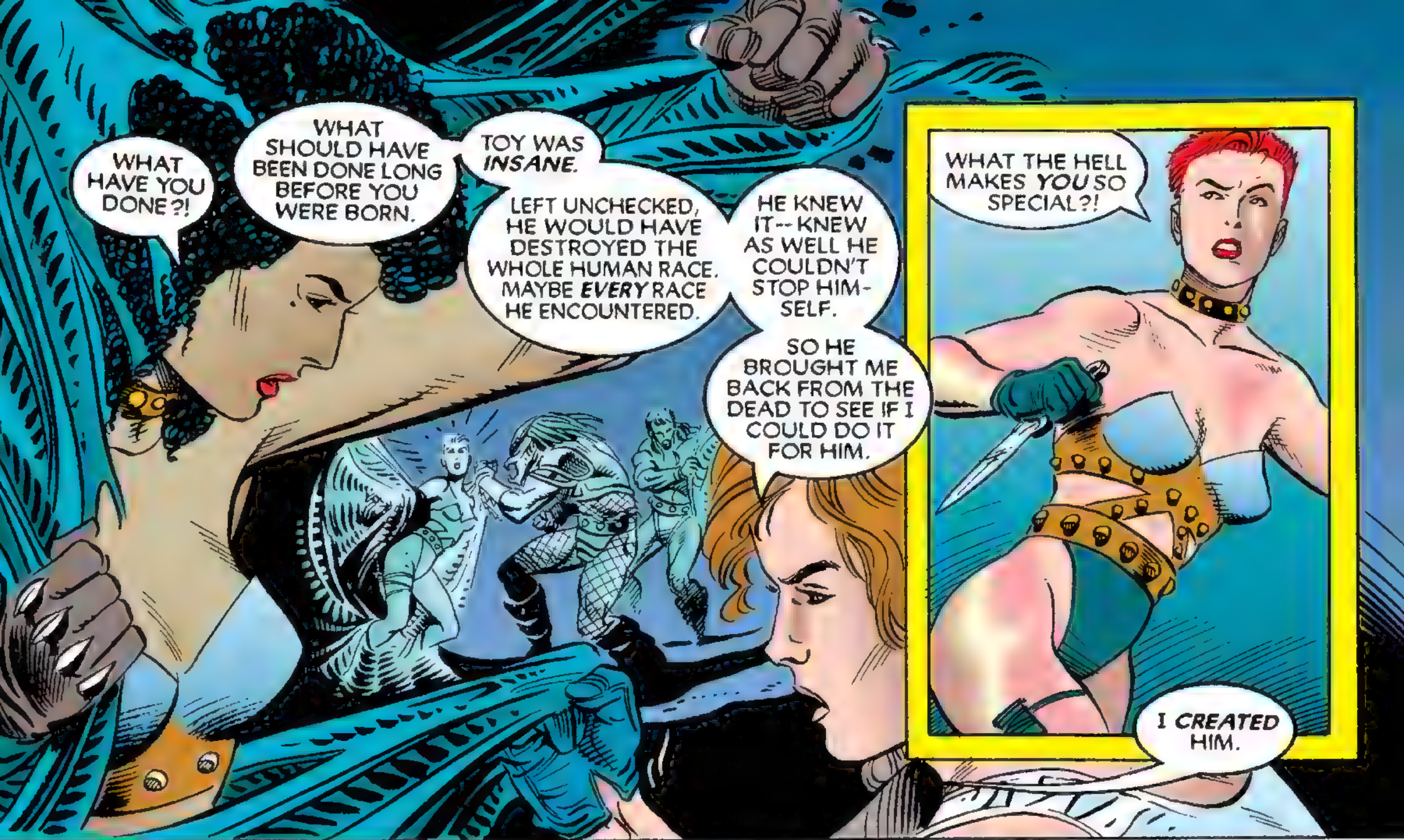


I GUESS
BOTH OF US
WERE BUILT
BETTER THAN
WE KNEW.

BLAM!

GOOD-BYE,
TOY.





WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!

WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DONE LONG BEFORE YOU WERE BORN.

TOY WAS *INSANE*.

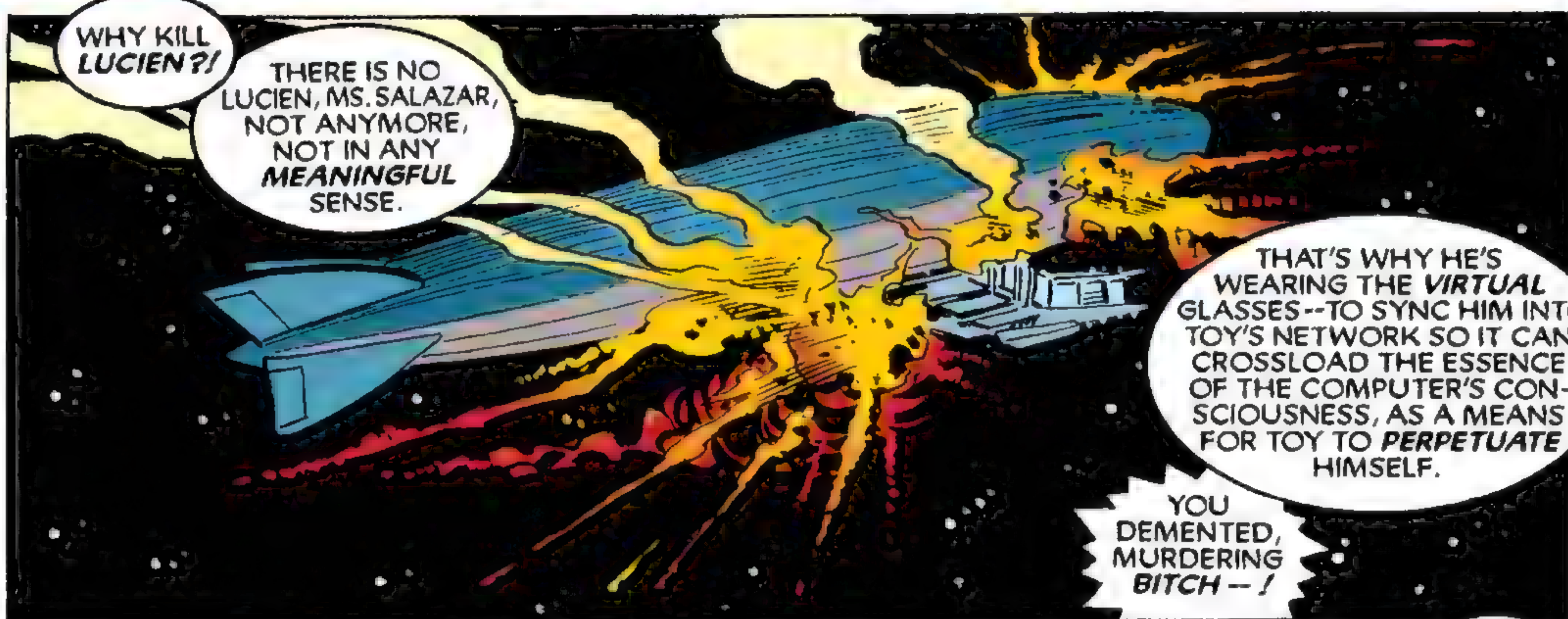
LEFT UNCHECKED, HE WOULD HAVE DESTROYED THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE. MAYBE *EVERY* RACE HE ENCOUNTERED.

HE KNEW IT-- KNEW AS WELL HE COULDN'T STOP HIMSELF.

SO HE BROUGHT ME BACK FROM THE DEAD TO SEE IF I COULD DO IT FOR HIM.

WHAT THE HELL MAKES YOU SO SPECIAL?!

I *CREATED* HIM.

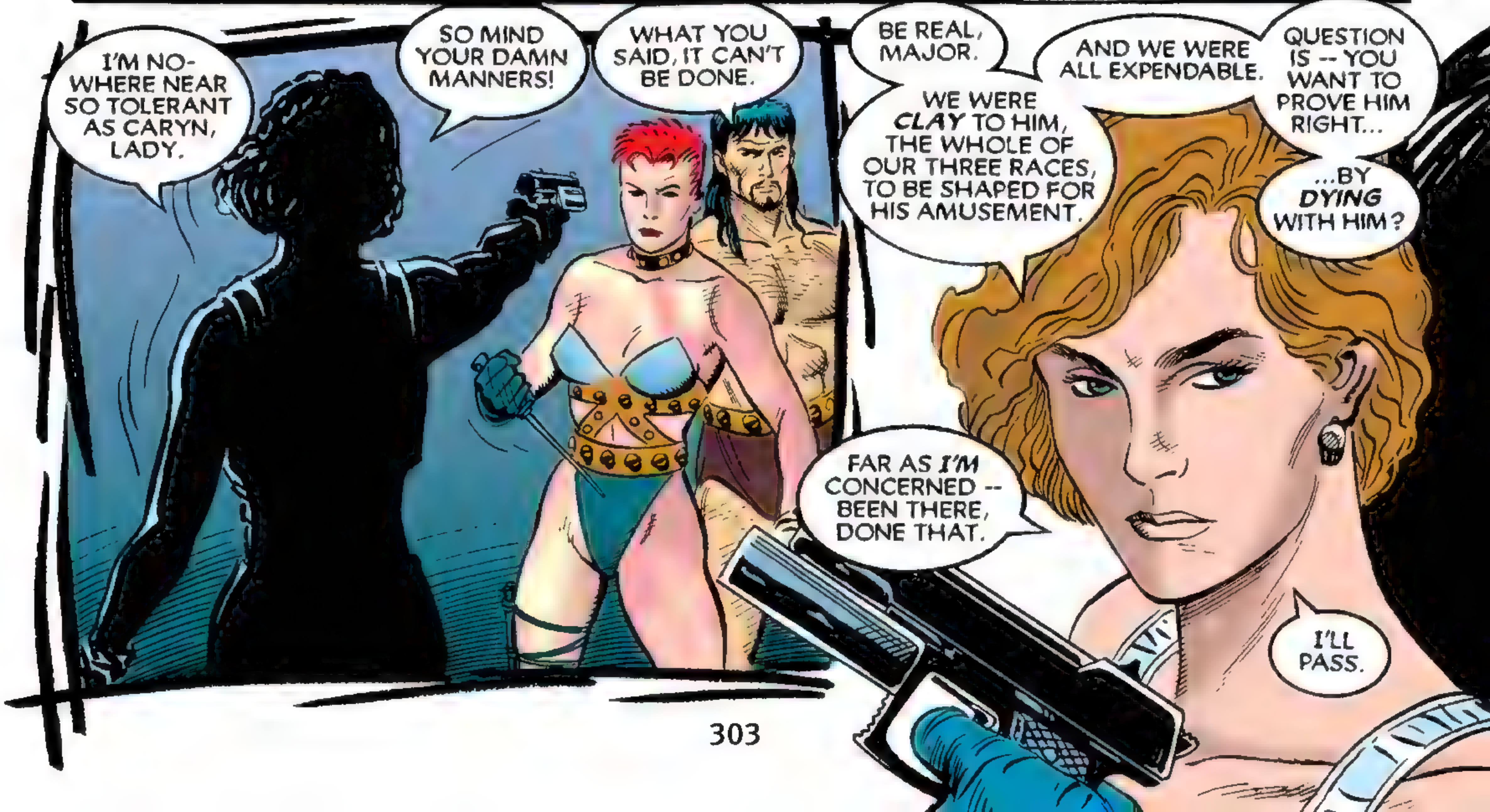


WHY KILL LUCIEN?!

THERE IS NO LUCIEN, MS. SALAZAR, NOT ANYMORE, NOT IN ANY *MEANINGFUL* SENSE.

THAT'S WHY HE'S WEARING THE *VIRTUAL* GLASSES--TO SYNC HIM INTO TOY'S NETWORK SO IT CAN CROSSLOAD THE ESSENCE OF THE COMPUTER'S CONSCIOUSNESS, AS A MEANS FOR TOY TO *PERPETUATE* HIMSELF.

YOU DEMENTED, MURDERING *BITCH*--!



I'M NO-WHERE NEAR SO TOLERANT AS CARYN, LADY.

SO MIND YOUR DAMN MANNERS!

WHAT YOU SAID, IT CAN'T BE DONE.

BE REAL, MAJOR.

AND WE WERE ALL EXPENDABLE.

QUESTION IS -- YOU WANT TO PROVE HIM RIGHT...

...BY *DYING* WITH HIM?

WE WERE *CLAY* TO HIM, THE WHOLE OF OUR THREE RACES, TO BE SHAPED FOR HIS AMUSEMENT.

FAR AS I'M CONCERNED -- BEEN THERE, DONE THAT.

I'LL PASS.



SHE DID THIS.

SHE KILLED THEM ALL!

OR SAVED US ALL.

"THANK YOU, DR. FRANKENSTEIN, FOR SLAYING THE MONSTER YOU CREATED"? BULL!

WITH THAT ATTITUDE, SALAZAR, YOU COULD JUST AS WELL CONDEMN OPPENHEIMER AND EINSTEIN FOR THE BOMB...

...OR GOD FOR ALL CREATION.

AT LEAST THE MONSTER'S DEAD.

THAT'S WHERE WE PART COMPANY, COLONEL.

I THINK WE LET THE REAL MONSTER WALK.

ASH PARNALL MURDERED THE MAN I WAS SWORN TO PROTECT.

SHE DESTROYED THE ONLY HOME I'VE EVER KNOWN.

I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU SAY--I DON'T CARE ABOUT HER SO-CALLED REASONS.

THOSE SCALES HAVE TO BE BALANCED.

"YOU CLAIM SHE'S A HERO.

"TO ME, SHE'S A TRAITOR TO HER RACE, AN ENEMY OF HUMANITY!"

"AND I WON'T REST UNTIL SHE PAYS FOR HER CRIMES!"

"WHEREVER SHE RUNS, HOWEVER SHE TRIES TO HIDE, I'LL FIND HER AND BRAND HER FOR WHAT SHE TRULY IS --

"--THE RENEGADE!"

I CAN LIVE WITH THAT.

FOR ROGER--FOR THE STORIES THAT WERE, AND THOSE THAT WILL FOREVER REMAIN DREAMS.

BOOTY



script
BARBARA KESEL

art
RON RANDALL

colors
CHRIS CHALENOR

lettering
STEVE DUTRO

title illustration
DEN BEAUVAIS





HEY, NORLEY...
BREAK TIME. HOW'S
IT GOIN' WITH THOSE
NAZIS AND THEIR
BUGS? THEY GONNA
BUST OUT AND
KILL US?

THEY JUST
TOOK APART CARGO
BAY FOUR AND THEY'VE
GOT EVIE WELDING
EXTRA WALLS INTO
PLACE.

I THINK
THEY'RE
ACTUALLY
TRYING TO
KEEP US
ALL ALIVE.

SAYS YOU.
ME, I FIGURE
WE'RE ALL TOAST
AFTER THOSE
MARINES GET
THEIR BUGS
DELIVERED.

THAT'S WHY I'M
KEEPING AN EYE ON
THEM FROM UP HERE.
IF ANYTHING DOES
HAPPEN, WE'LL
KNOW FIRST.

WHY'D
WE SAY
YES?

MONEY.
BIG
MONEY...

... AND
BIG
GUNS.

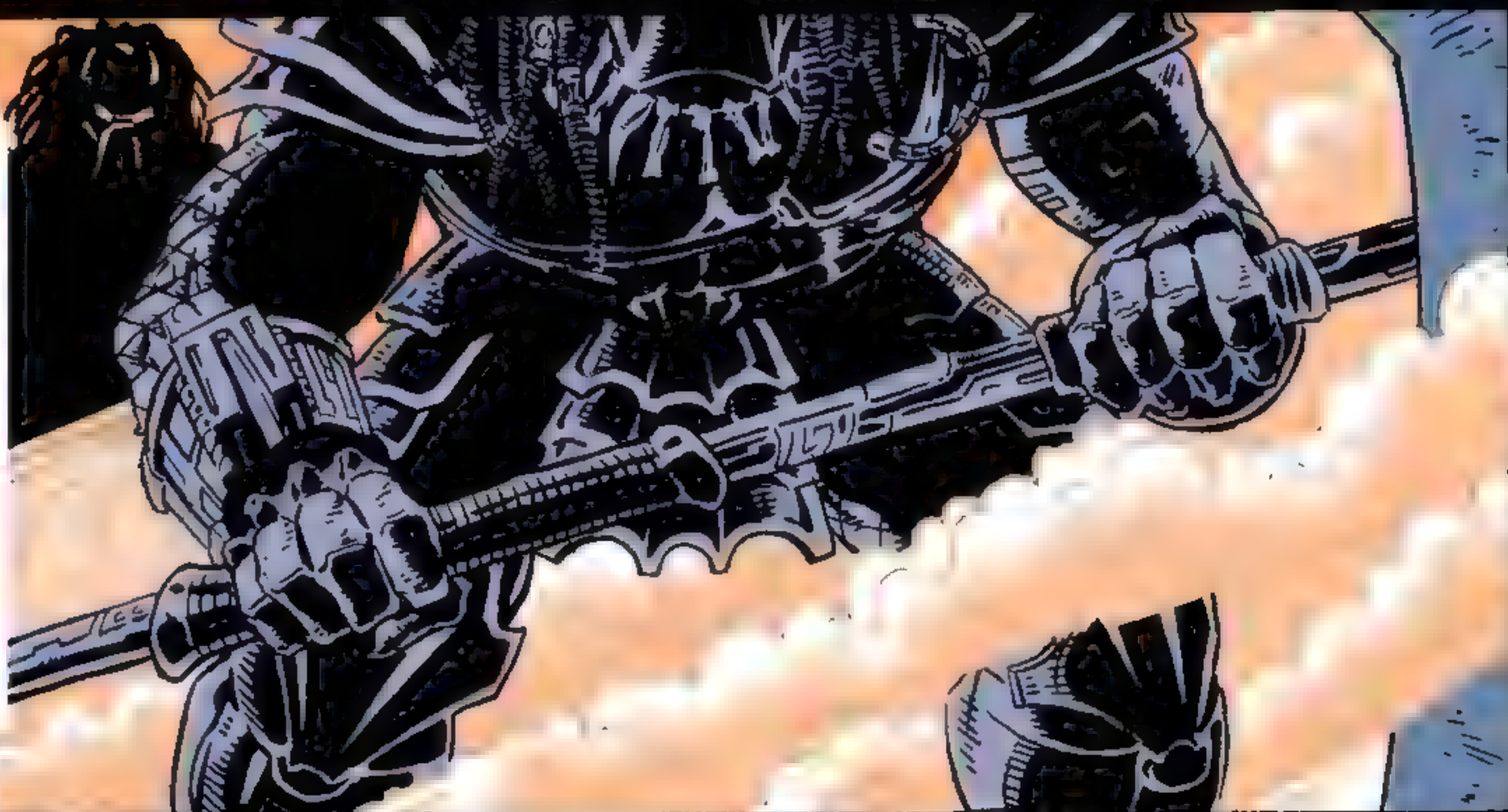
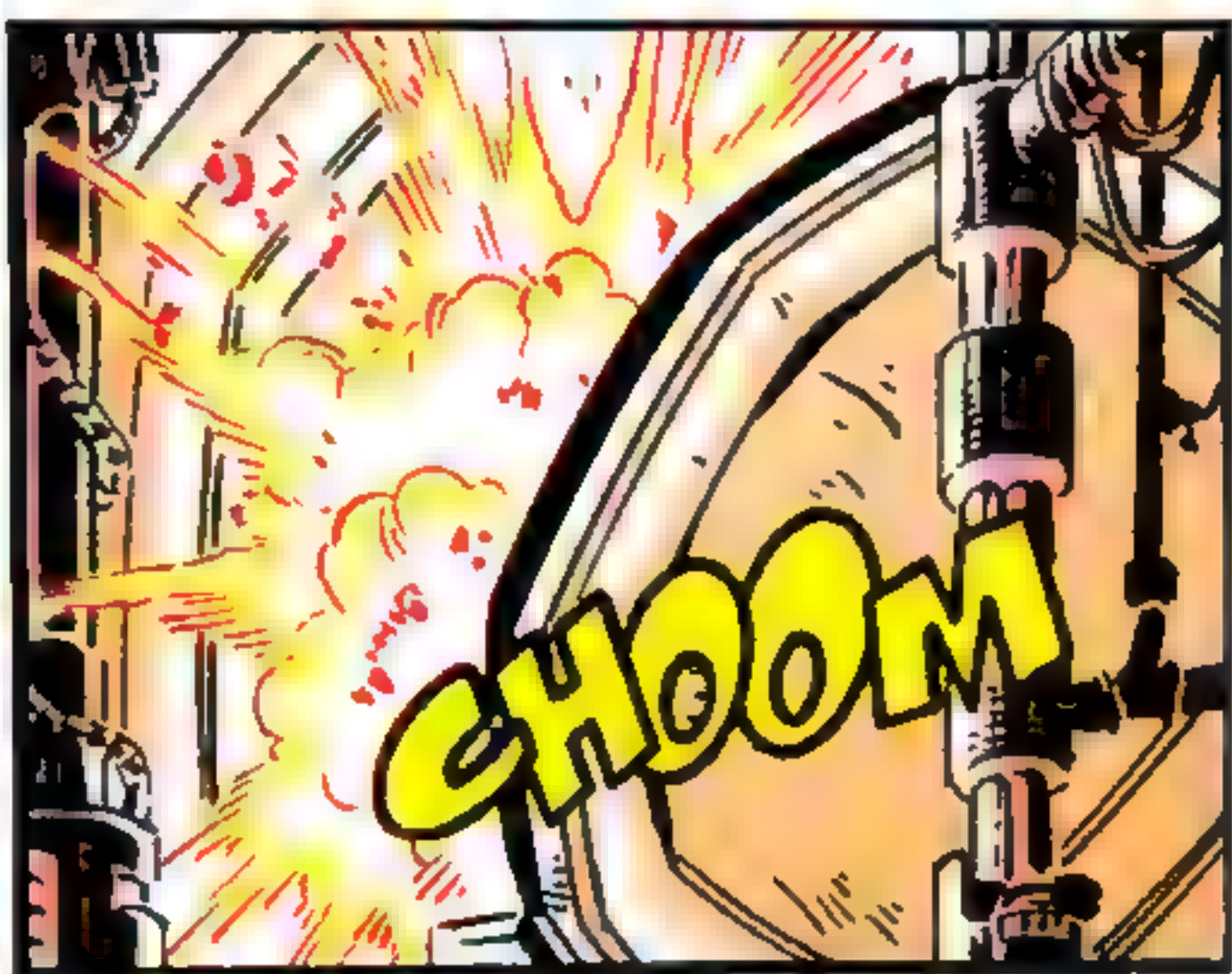
HEY
LOOKY THERE--
YOU'VE GOT
A HULL
ALERT.

WE'VE BEEN GETTING LOTS. IT'S THEM CUTTING DOWN THAT CARGO
BAY. IT TRIPS THE SENSORS, GIVES US FALSE ALARMS--

"-- NOTHING'S
REALLY OUT
THERE."



KLANK
KREENK



HEY,
TOFF...

WHAT
HAPPENS WHEN
THE SLACK WHO
RUNS THIS SHIP
FINDS OUT WE'RE
BOGUS?

AREN'T WE
GONNA FRY FOR
IMPERSONATING
COLONIAL
MARINES?

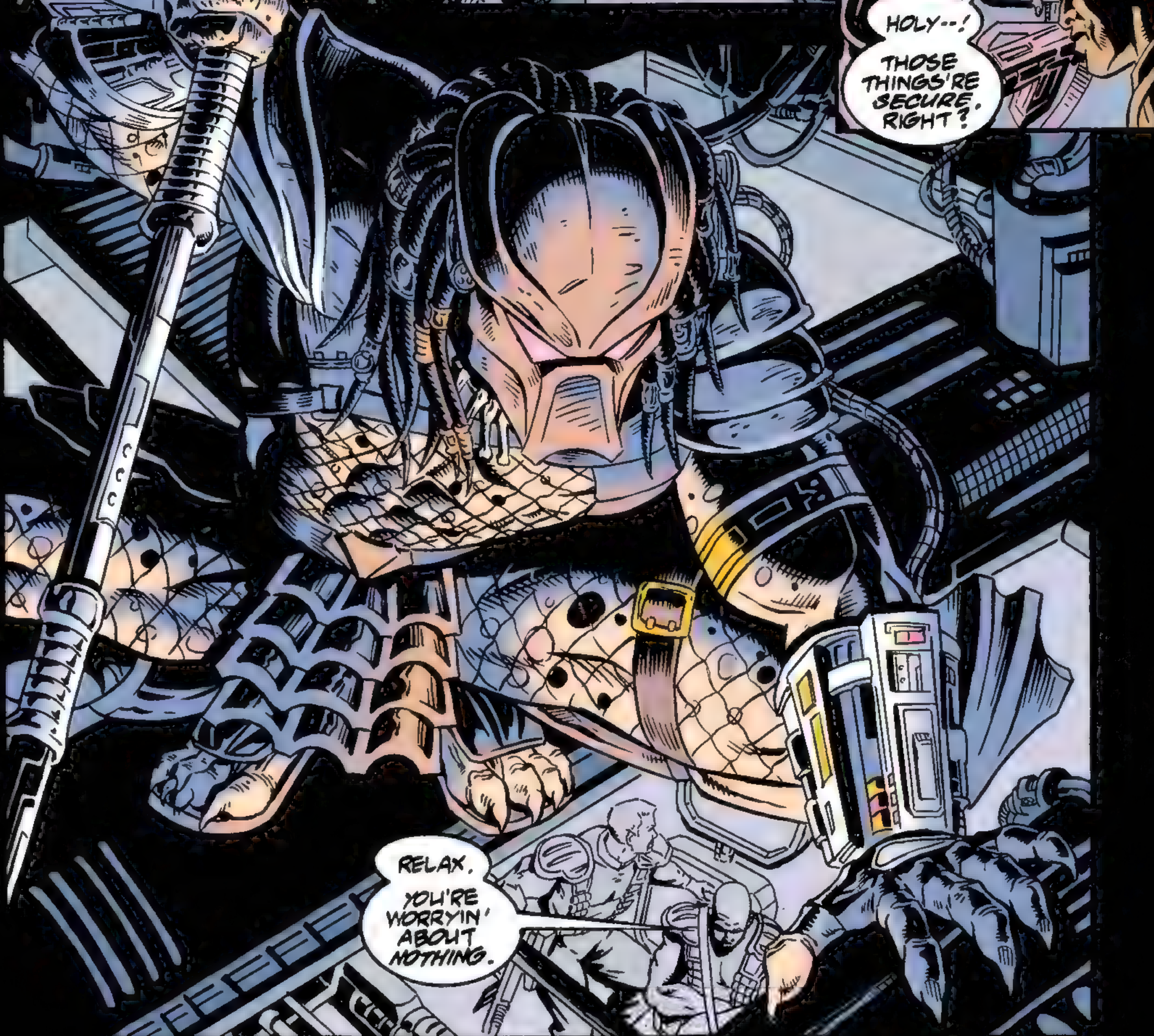
NO MORE
SO THAN FOR
STEALING WEYLAND-
YUTANI PROPERTY
TO DELIVER TO THE
INNOMINATA
PEOPLE.

LONG AS WE
SEEM TO HAVE
THE AUTHORITY,
WE HAVE THE
AUTHORITY.

THEY DON'T
QUESTION
AUTHORITY,
JACK.



HOLY--!
THOSE
THINGS'RE
SECURE.
RIGHT?



RELAX.
YOU'RE
WORRYIN'
ABOUT
NOTHING.

"THOSE BUGS IN THE HOLD ARE GOING NOWHERE."

"WE JUST RIDE THIS SHIP THROUGH BIG OL' SPACE TO A BIG MOTHER PAYCHECK AT THE OTHER END."

TELL YA, TOFF, I DIDN'T LIKE THOSE THINGS IN SIM, AND THEY AIN'T MUCH PRETTIER FOR REAL.

CATCHIN' EM WASN'T HARD AS I EXPECTED, EITHER.

THESE ARE YOUNG ONES, JACK. GIVE 'EM TIME.

WELL, TIME'S WHAT THEY AIN'T GOT, ISN'T IT?

BIG NYAH TO YOU, MOTHER LADY-- YOU'RE BOUND FOR THE INNOMINATA AND ELECTRODES IN YOUR HEAD--REAL SCIENCE DOCTOR STUFF.

WE'LL SEE WHO HISSES THEN, WON'T WE?

KRAK

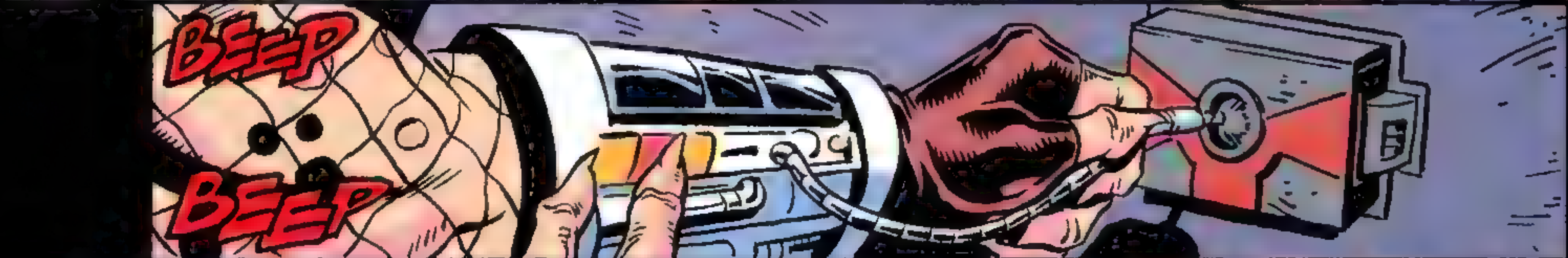
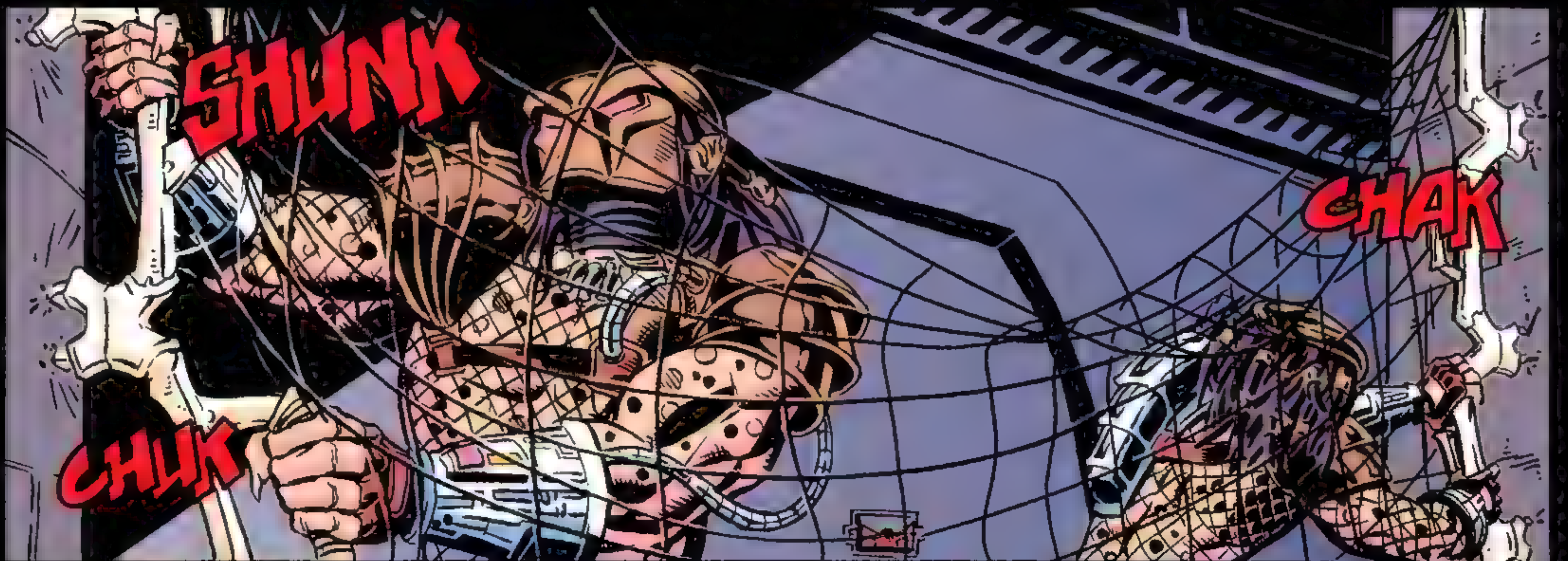
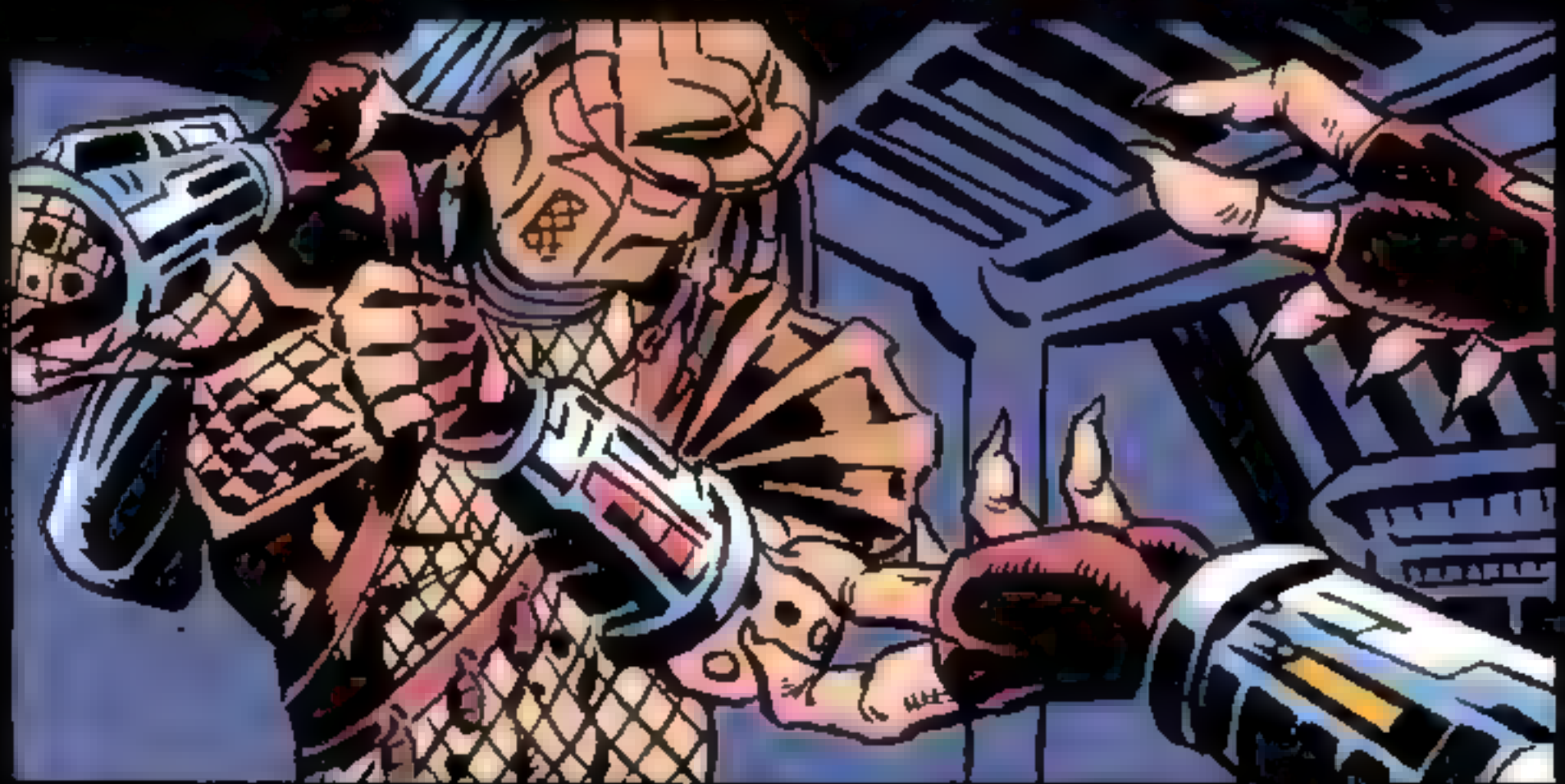
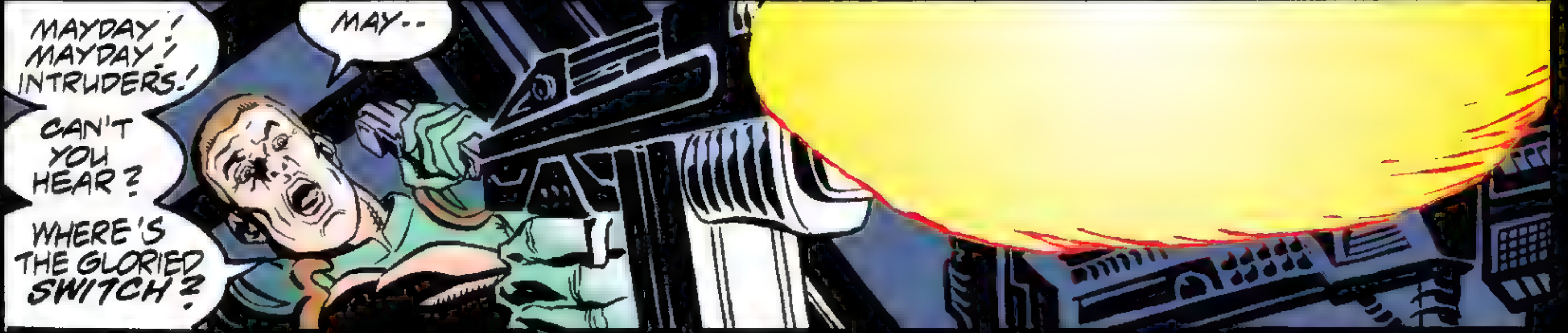
WHA--?

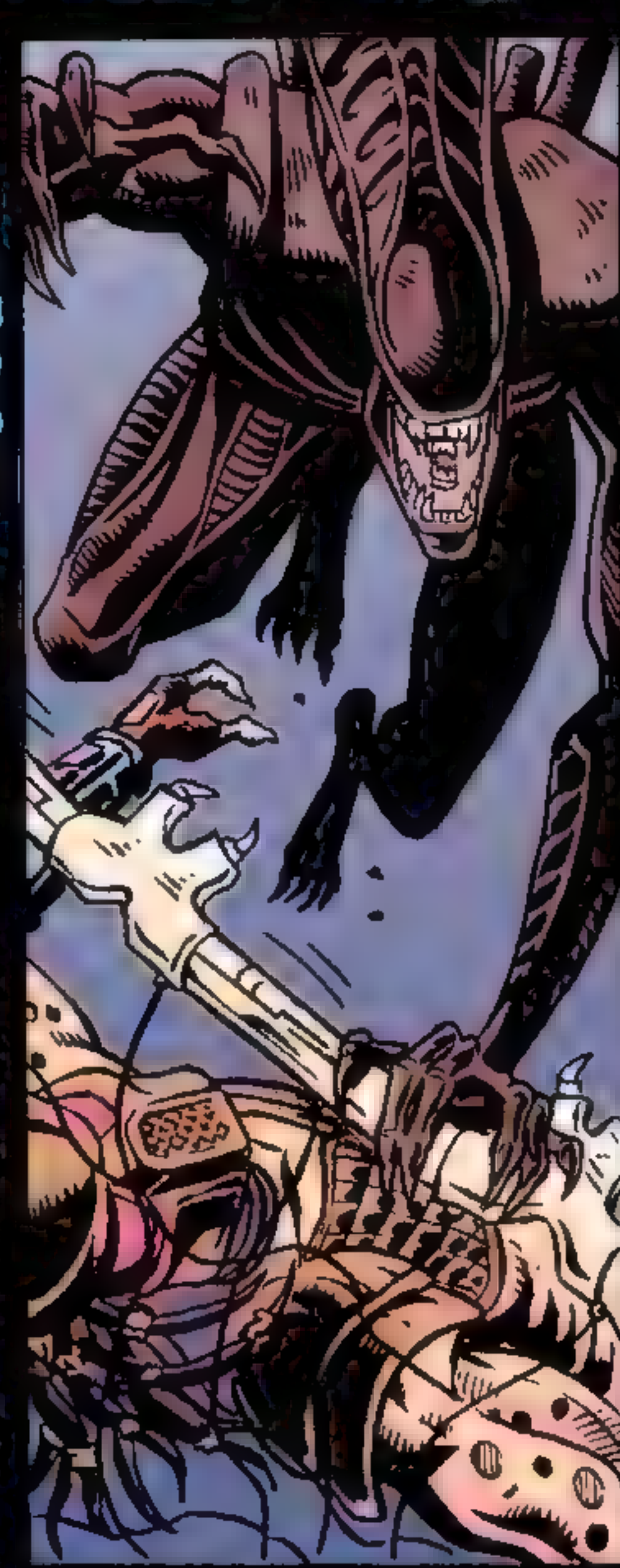
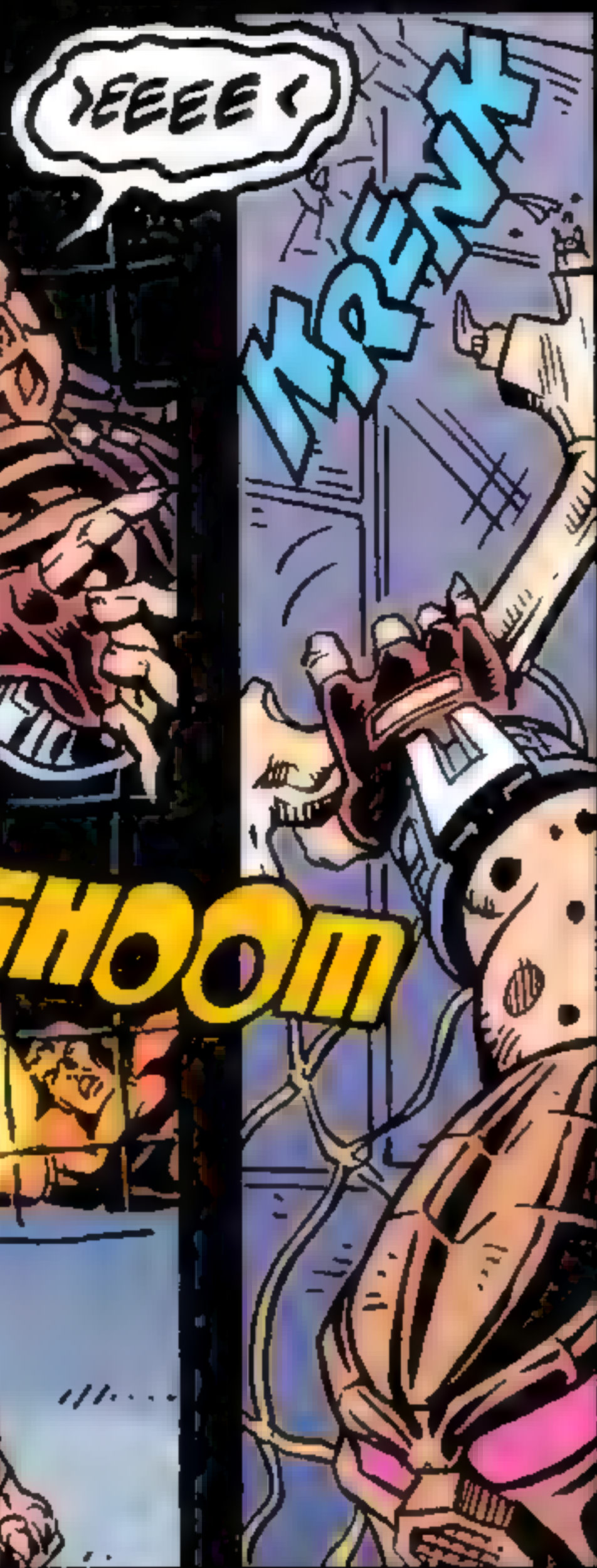
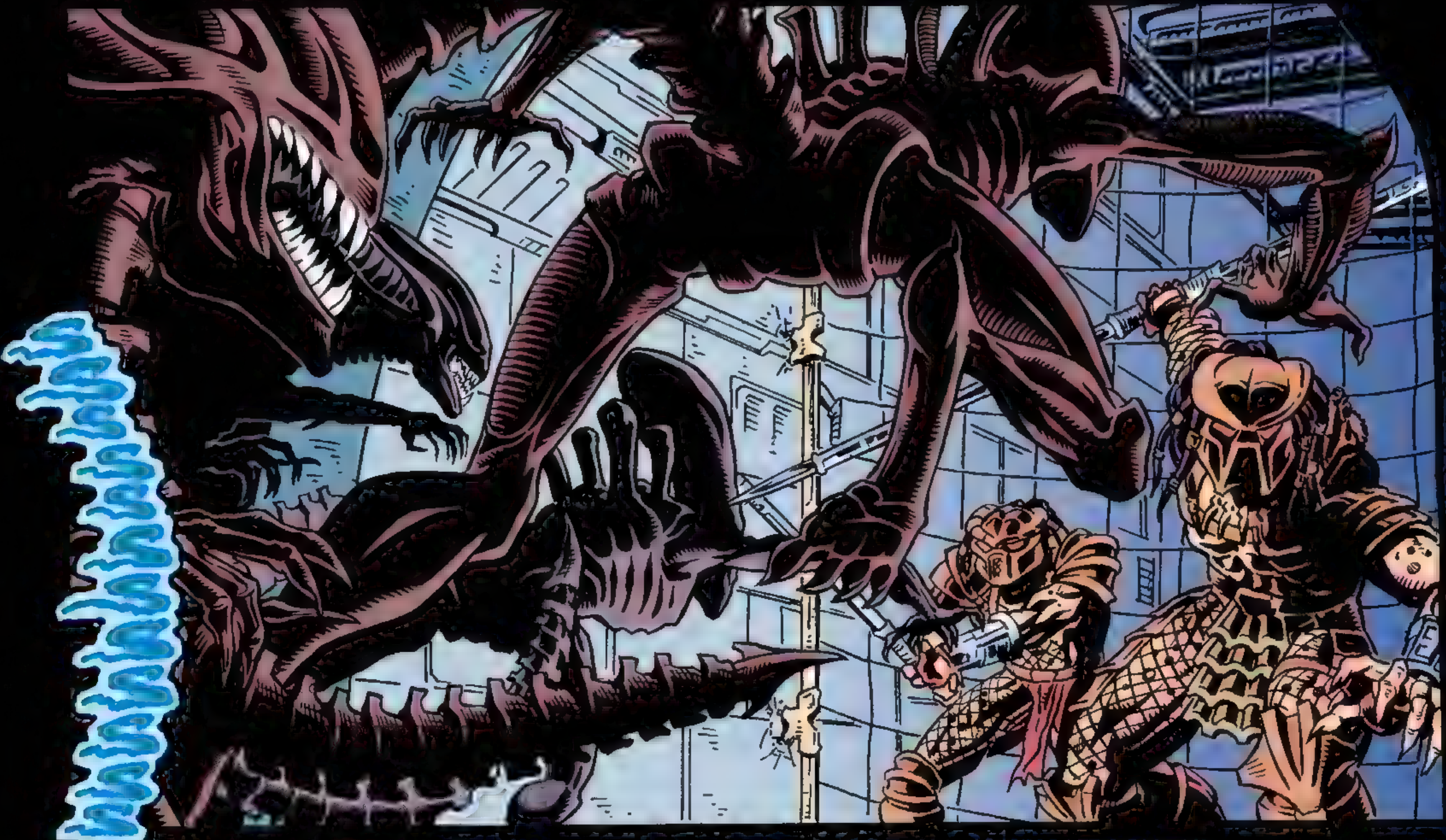
WE'LL SEE WHO HISSES THEN--C
WHA--

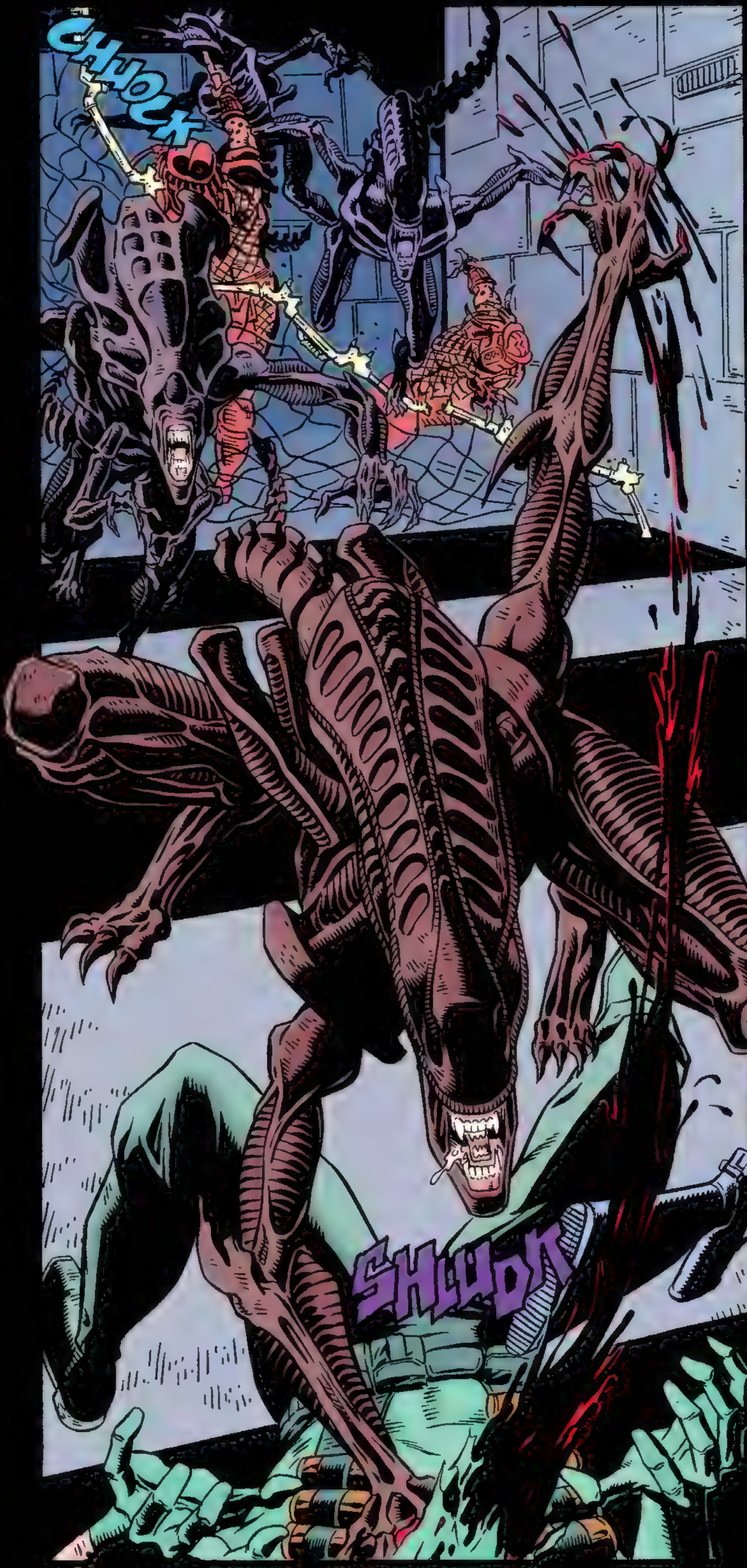
OH, MA--

OH, MA--

OH, MA--







UH--

UH--
NORLEY...
...BETTER
LOOK...

WHAT?

"LOOKS LIKE THOSE BUGS ARE LOOSE!"

"WHA--?"

FIVE
BLIPS--
CORRIDOR
TWO-A,
SEVEN-A,
NINE--

ONE'S
HEADING
RIGHT FOR
EVIE!

EVIE!
ALERT!
SHIP ALERT!
WE'VE GOT
HOSTILES
ABOARD!

♪ SWEENG
LOOOOW. ♪
SWEET
CHARIOUHT...

GET
YOUR REAR
OUTTA
THERE,
NOW!

EVIE?
NO
RESPONSE--

CAN'T YA JUST SEND
THAT CORRIDOR INTO
VACUUM AND PUMP
'EM OUTSIDE?

CAN'T,
SHEL--LOOK--SHE'S
OUT OF HER SUIT!
IT'D KILL HER.

EVIE!
I'M WASTING
TIME--SHE
CAN'T HEAR
ME.

THOSE THINGS
TOOK OUT THE
MARINES REAL
FAST.

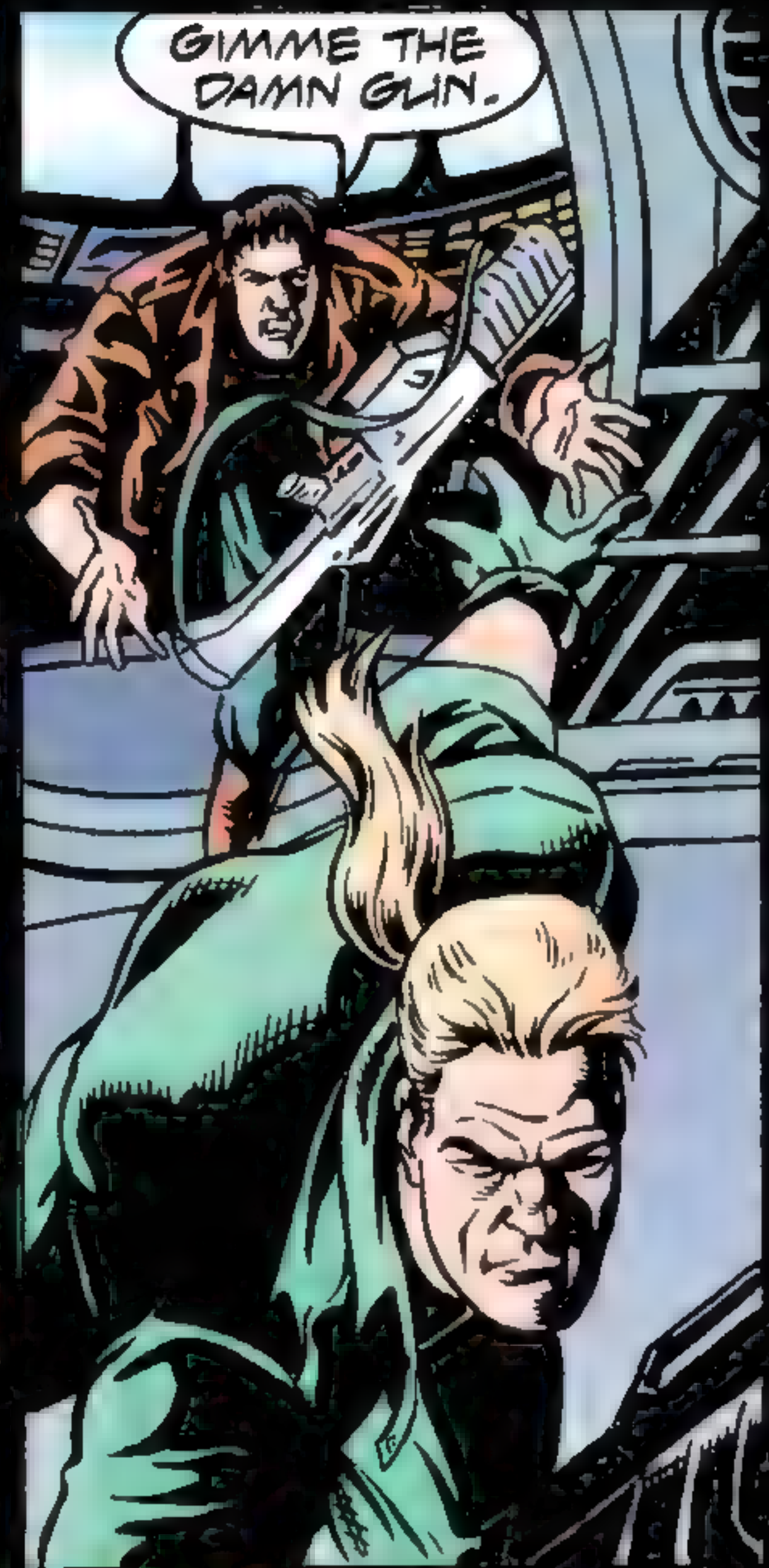
WE'D
BETTER
HOIST TAIL
DOWN THERE
AND PROTECT
HER.



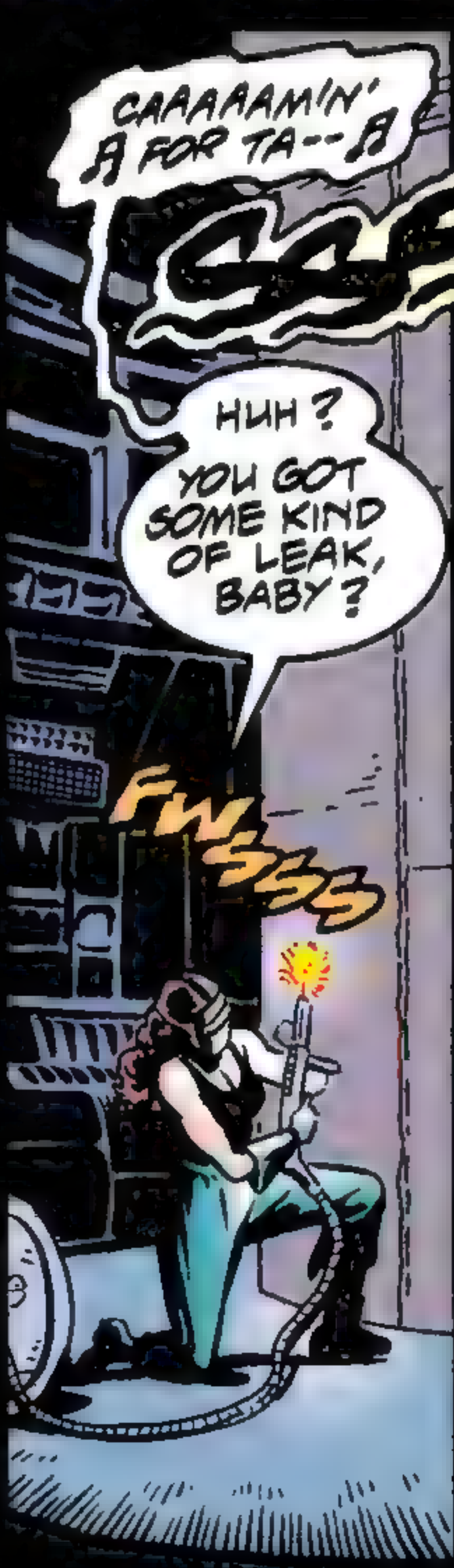
YOU'D
BEST
TAKE
ONE OF
THESE.

NO WAY.
NO STICKS
OF DEATH.
UH, UH.

WELL, I'M
SURE EVIE'LL
APPRECIATE
YOUR
MORAL
STANCE
FROM
HEAVEN.



GIMME THE
DAMN GUN.



CAAAAMIN'
A FOR TA--A

HUH?
YOU GOT
SOME KIND
OF LEAK,
BABY?

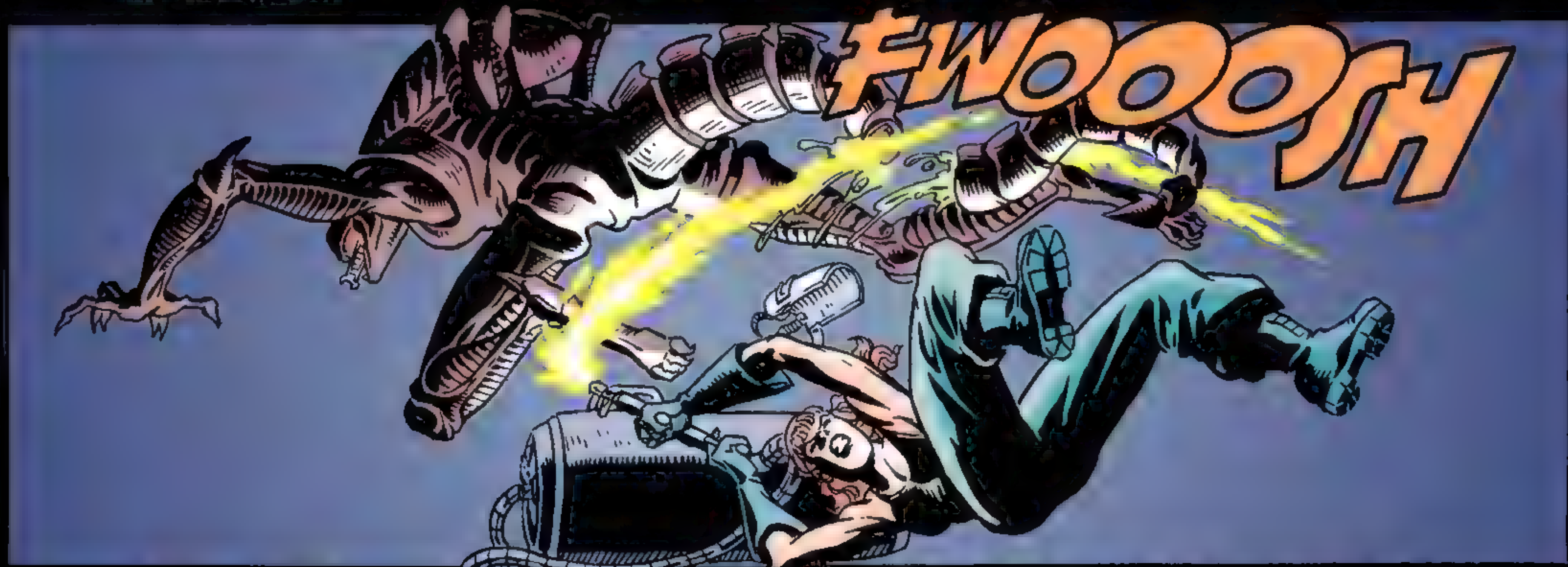
FWSSSS

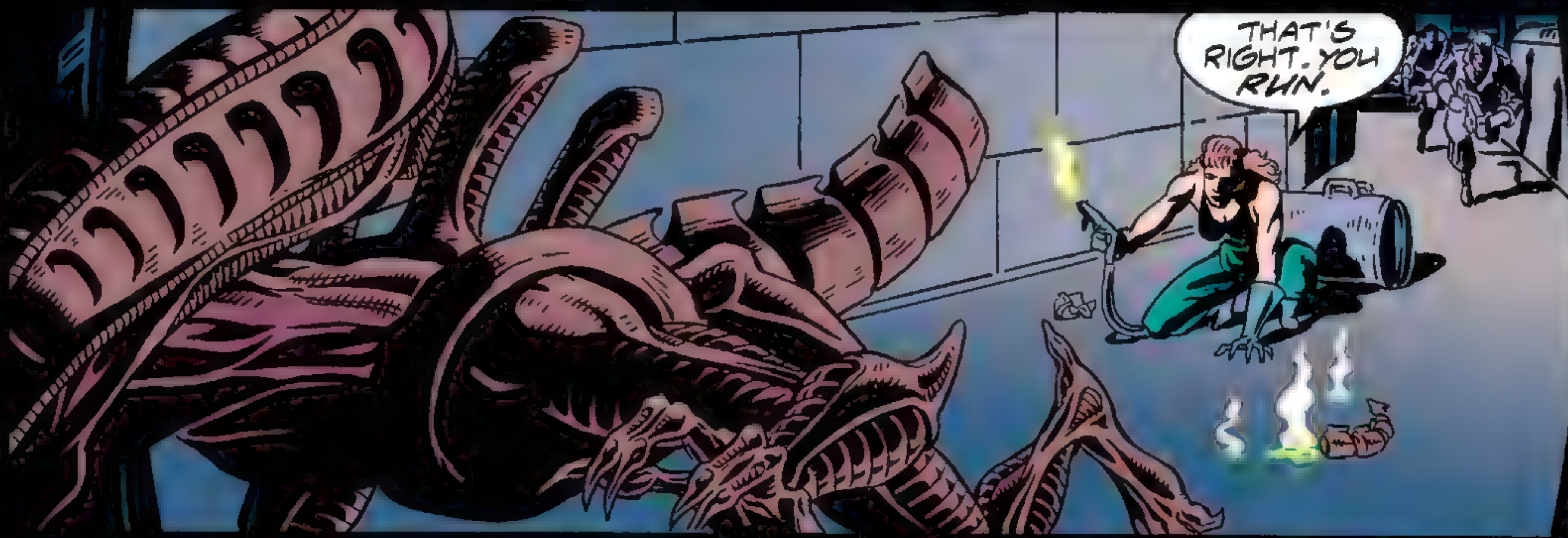


I DON'T
SEE
ANYTHING.
SO TELL
MOMMY--
WHERE'S
THAT
HISSING
COMING
FROM?



OH.



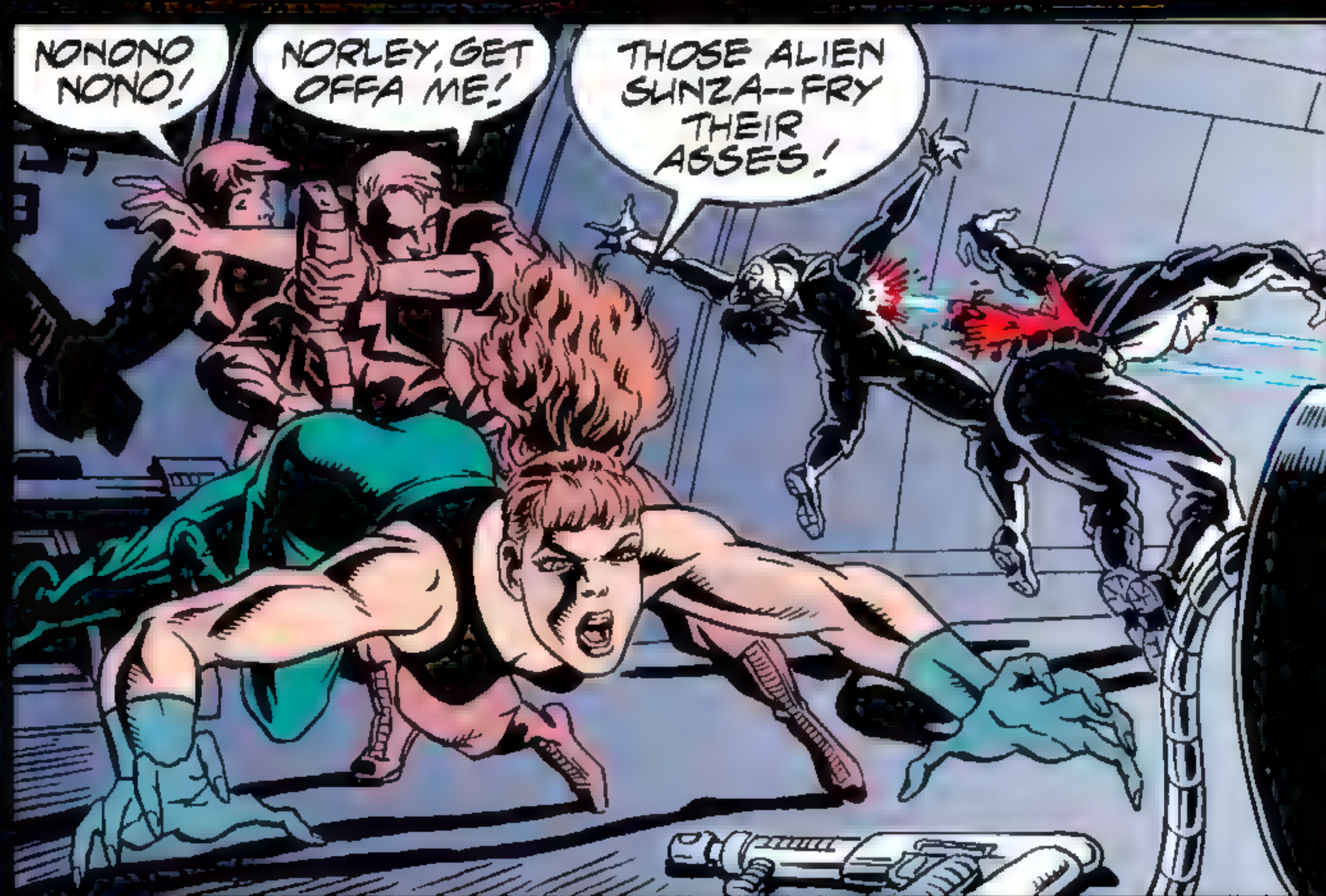
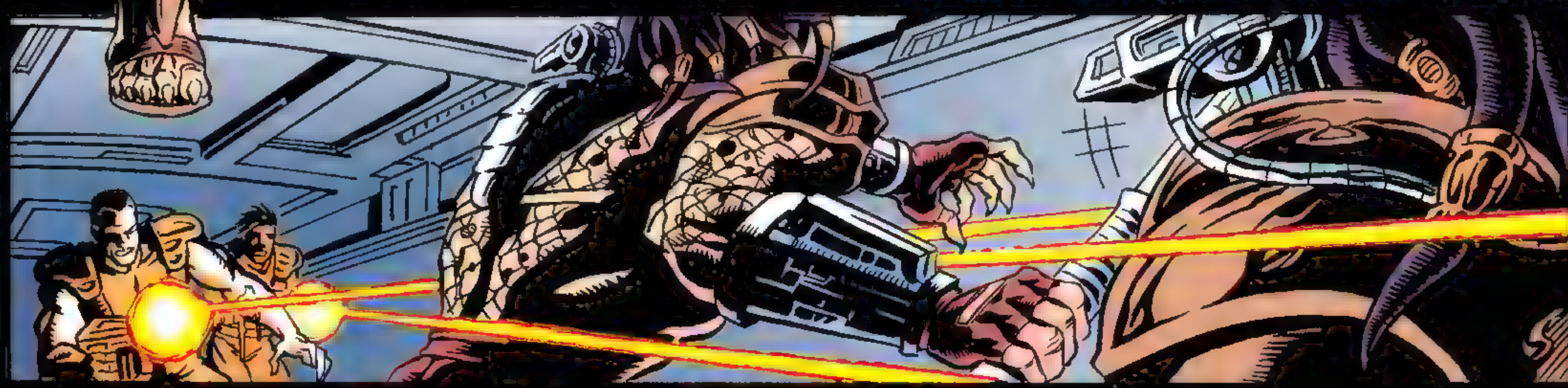


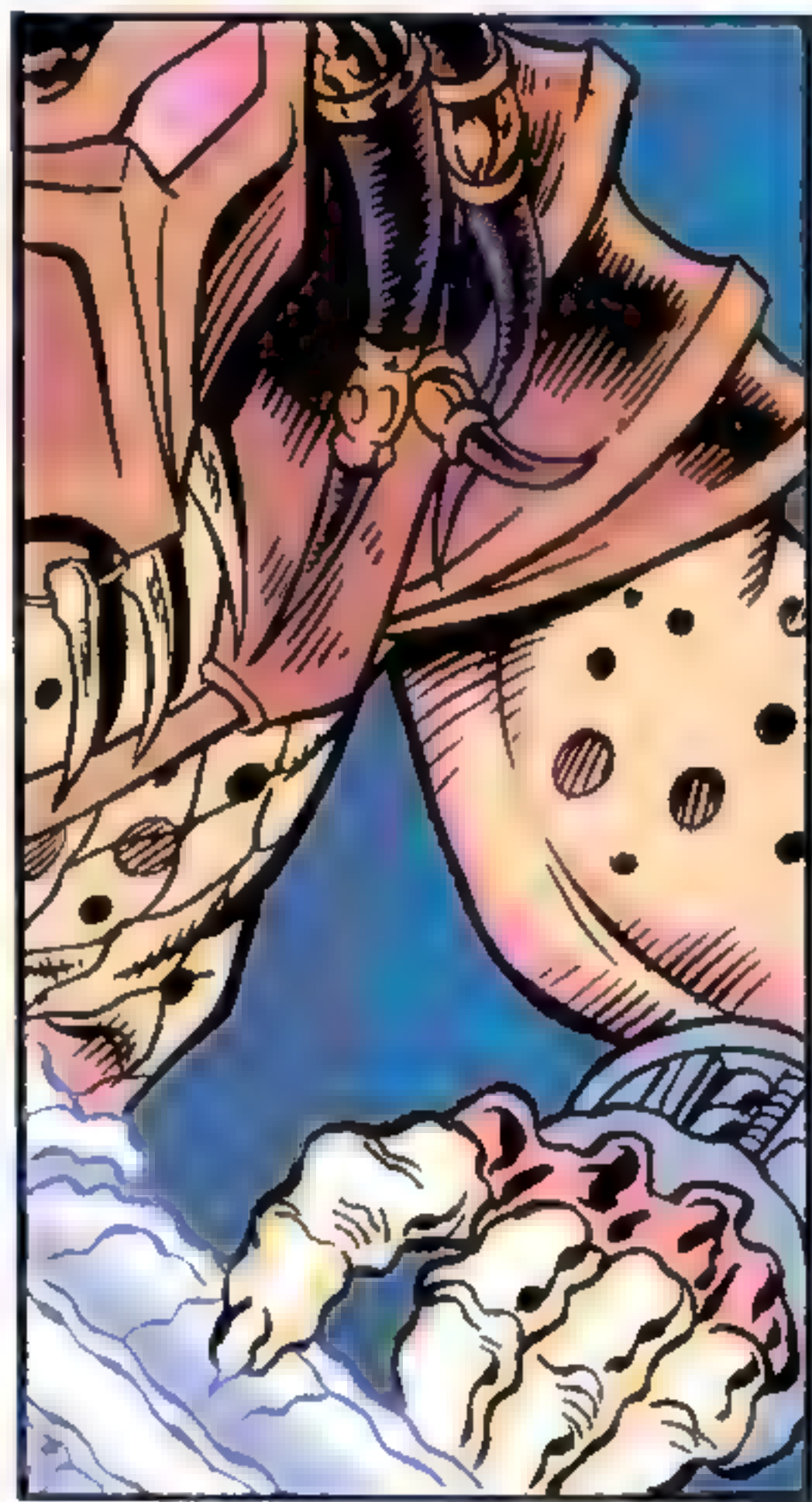
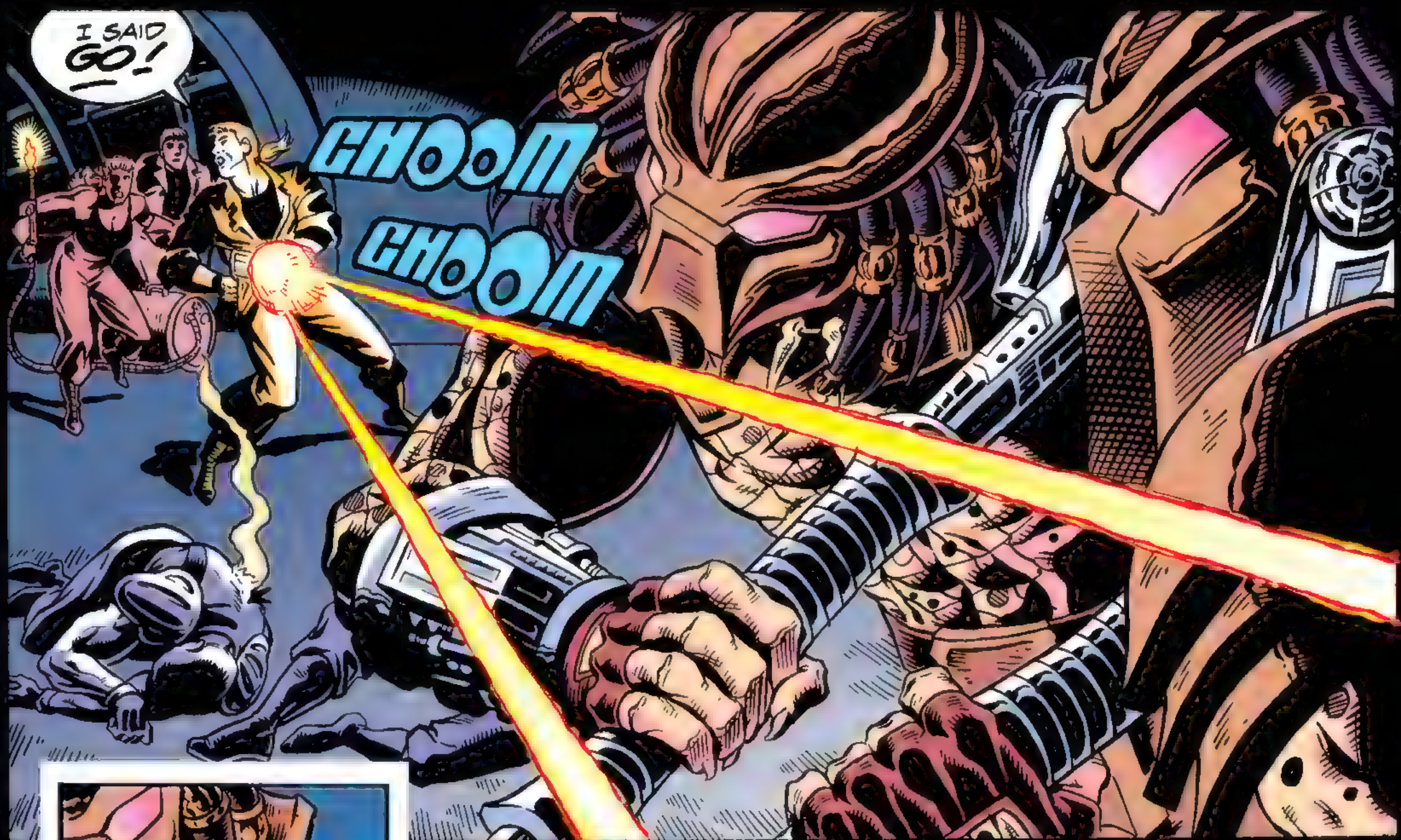


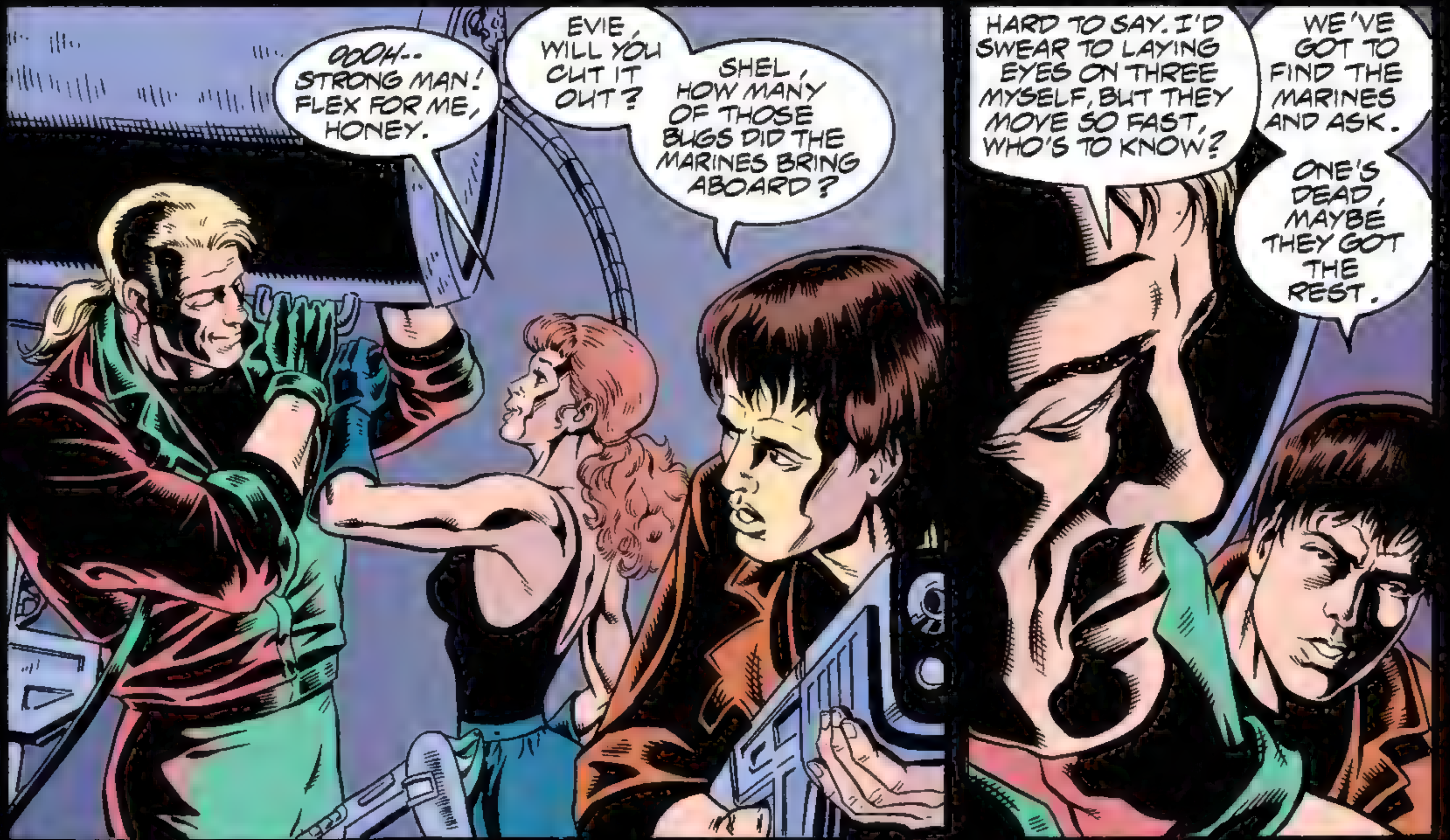
VICTOR-- IT'S NOT JUST BUGS! ONE OF THEM!

YEAH-- WE GET ALL THE LUCK!









OOOH--
STRONG MAN!
FLEX FOR ME,
HONEY.

EVIE,
WILL YOU
CUT IT
OUT?

SHEL,
HOW MANY
OF THOSE
BUGS DID THE
MARINES BRING
ABOARD?

HARD TO SAY. I'D
SWEAR TO LAYING
EYES ON THREE
MYSELF, BUT THEY
MOVE SO FAST,
WHO'S TO KNOW?

WE'VE
GOT TO
FIND THE
MARINES
AND ASK.

ONE'S
DEAD,
MAYBE
THEY GOT
THE REST.



OKAY,
SO I WILL BE
THE ONE TO ASK
THE SO VERY
OBVIOUS QUESTION
WE'RE ALL
THINKING ABOUT--

THREE
BUGS, TWO
HUNTERS, TWO
DEAD MARINES--

WHY
AREN'T
WE
DEAD?



DUMB
LUCK, I'D
SAY.

THEY
APPEAR TO BE
OUT FOR
SOMETHING
PARTICULAR.

THEY
KILLED THE
LITTLE BUG,
SO I'D GUESS
THEY REALLY
WANT THE
MAMA.

AND WE
JUST DON'T
RATE HIGH
ENOUGH ON THE
OL' THREAT
SCALE TO
BOTHER
WITH.

I AM SO
INSULTED.

RELIEVED,
BUT
INSULTED.



THIS IS
REALLY
CREEPY.

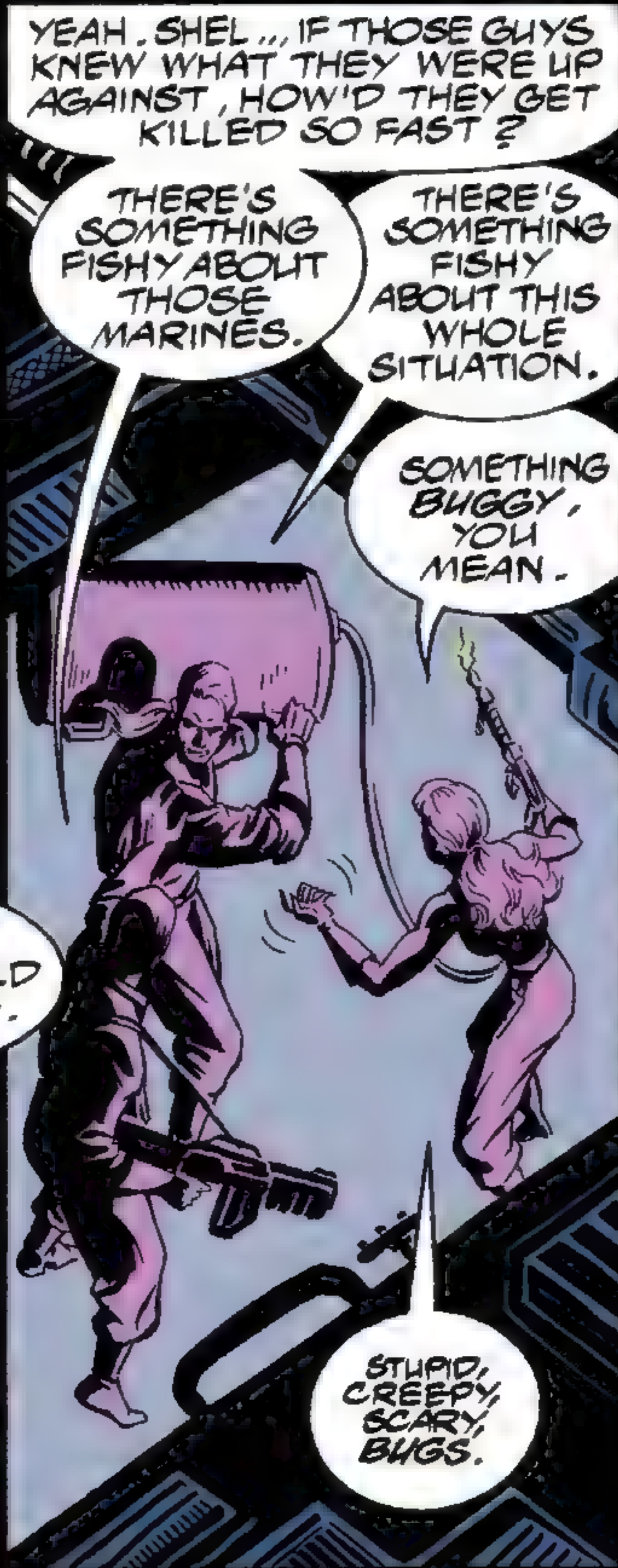


THEY'RE
NOT AFTER
US, RIGHT?
EVEN
THOUGH WE
CAN'T SEE
THEM?

I THINK THE FACT
THAT YOU'RE HERE
TO ASK THAT QUESTION,
ANSWERS THAT
QUESTION, EVIE.

THOSE
MARINES SURE
KNEW WHAT
THOSE CRITTERS
WERE.

I WISH
THEY'D TOLD
US MORE.



YEAH, SHEL ... IF THOSE GUYS
KNEW WHAT THEY WERE UP
AGAINST, HOW'D THEY GET
KILLED SO FAST?

THERE'S
SOMETHING
FISHY ABOUT
THOSE
MARINES.

THERE'S
SOMETHING
FISHY
ABOUT THIS
WHOLE
SITUATION.

SOMETHING
BUGGY,
YOU
MEAN.

STUPID,
CREEPY,
SCARY,
BUGS.



HANG ON. I'LL JUICE
UP OL' BERTHA SO
WE CAN SEE WHAT'S
WAITING FOR US.

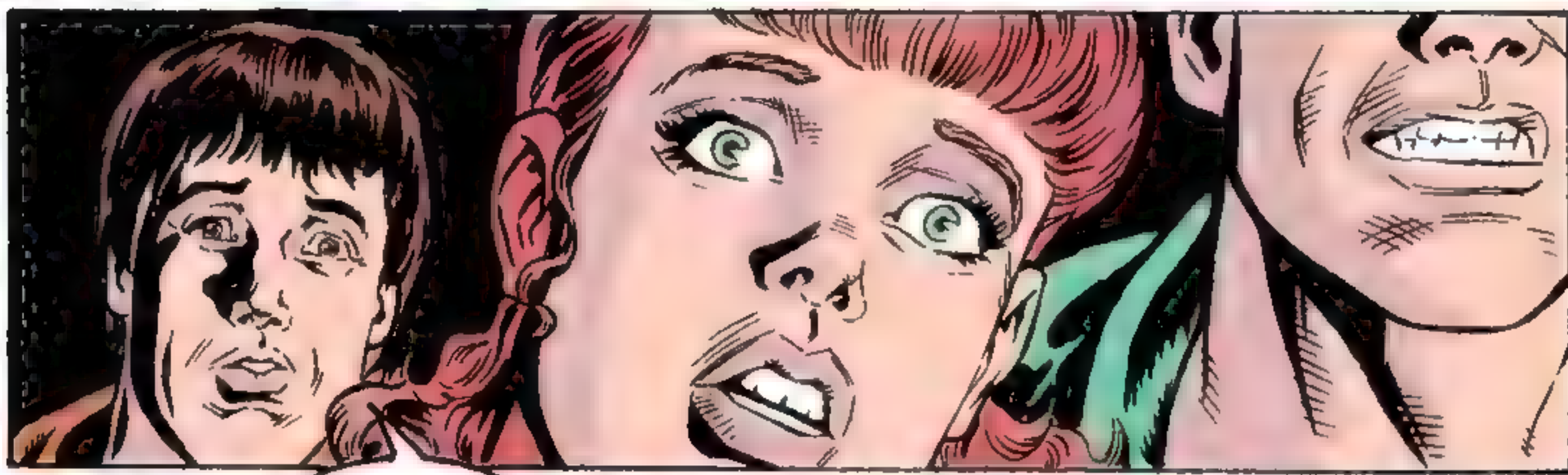


THIS IS
POINTLESS.
IF IT'S THE
HUNTERS,
THEY'RE
PROB'LY STILL
INVISIBLE.

I DON'T
CARE,
NORLEY!

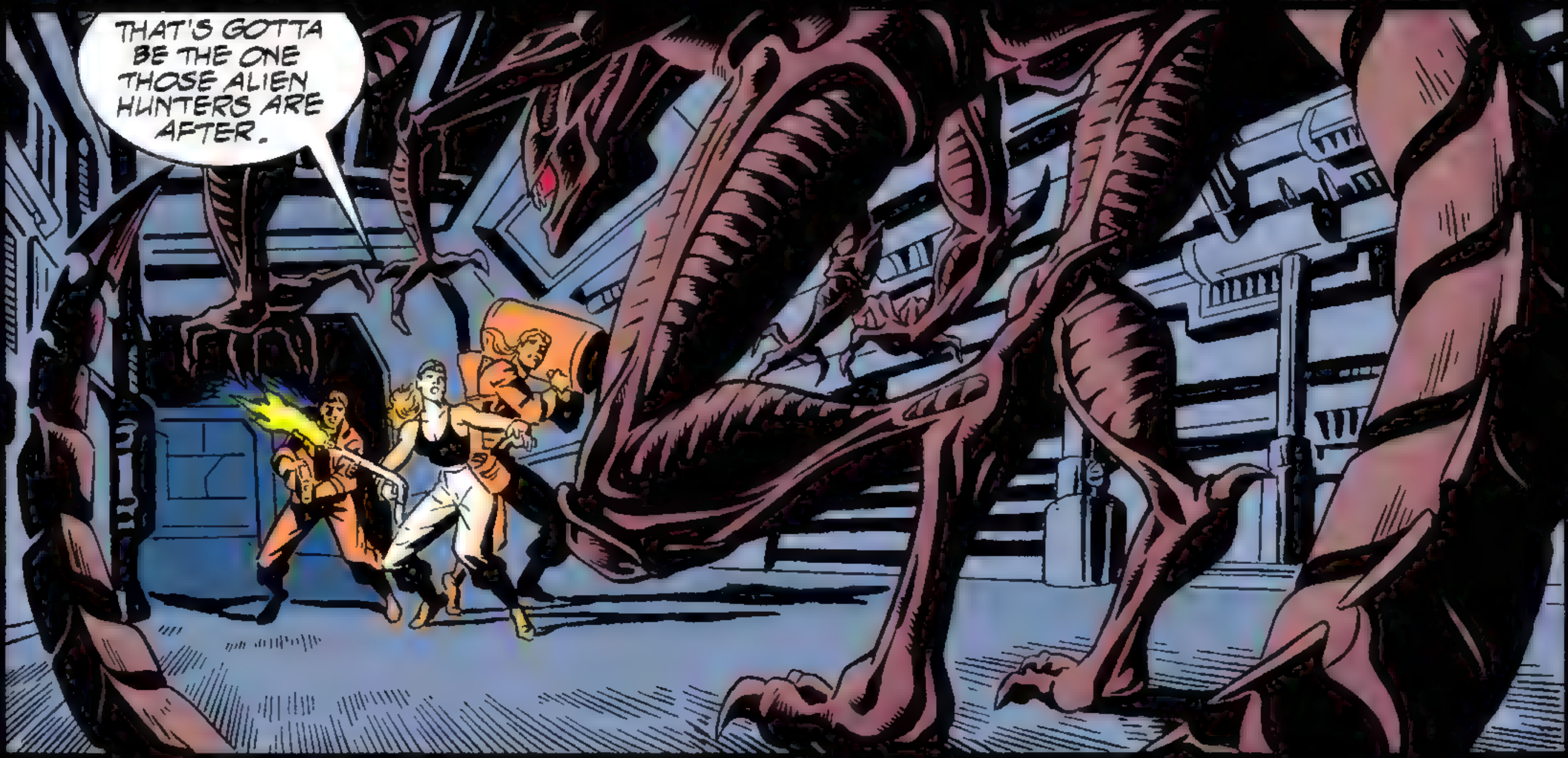
IF I'M GONNA GET KILLED IN THE
PASSAGEWAY OF A SECOND-RATE
CARGO SHIP, I WANT TO SEE IT
COMING SO I CAN ... FACE IT
LIKE A WOMAN!

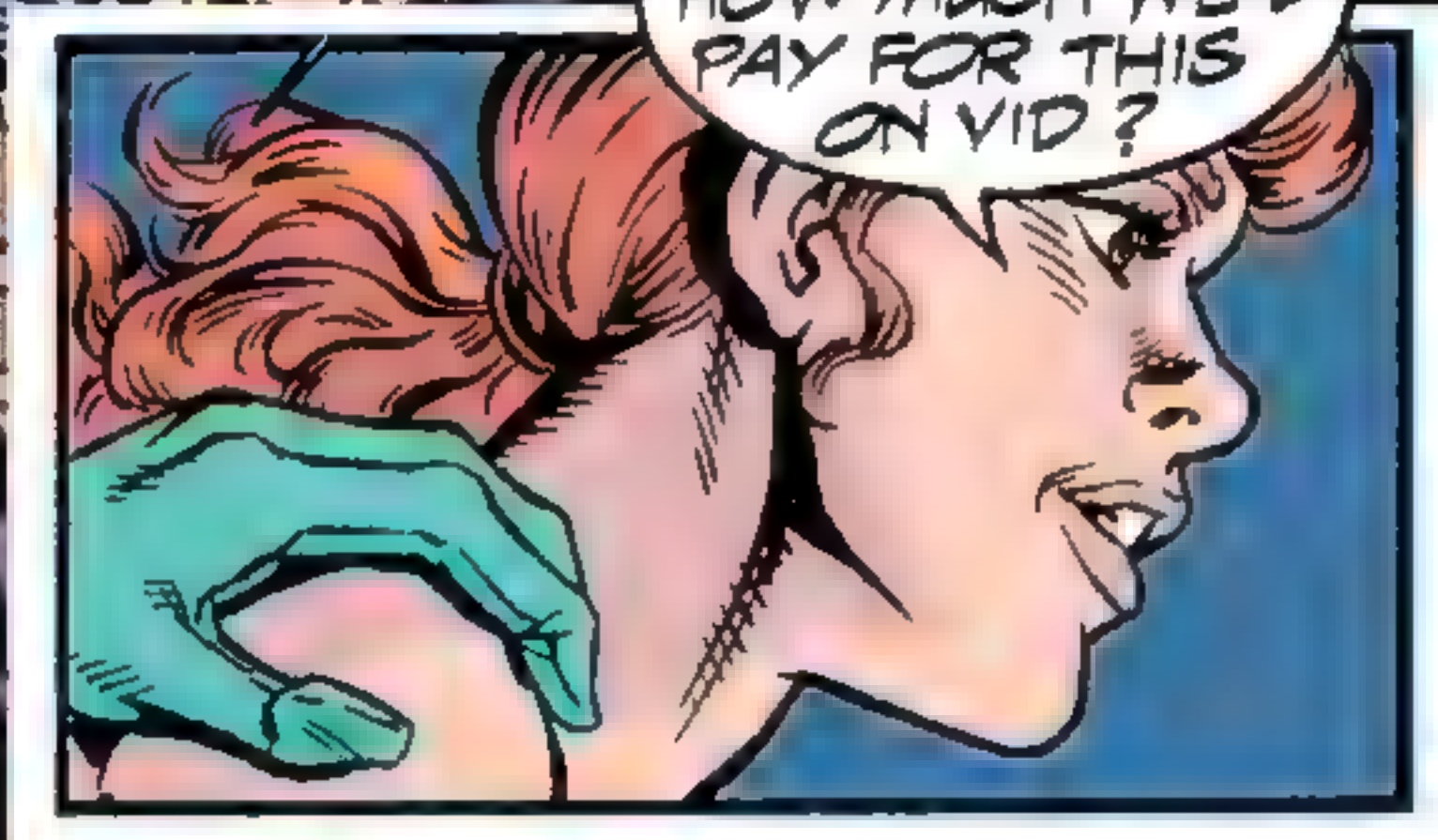
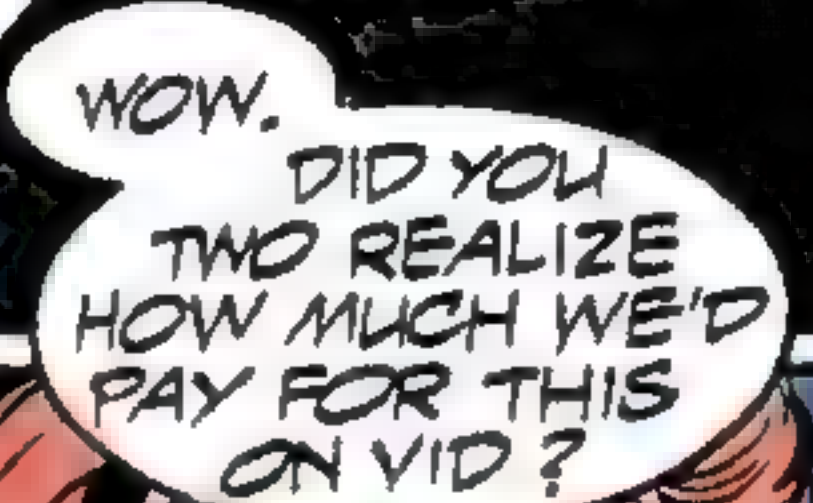
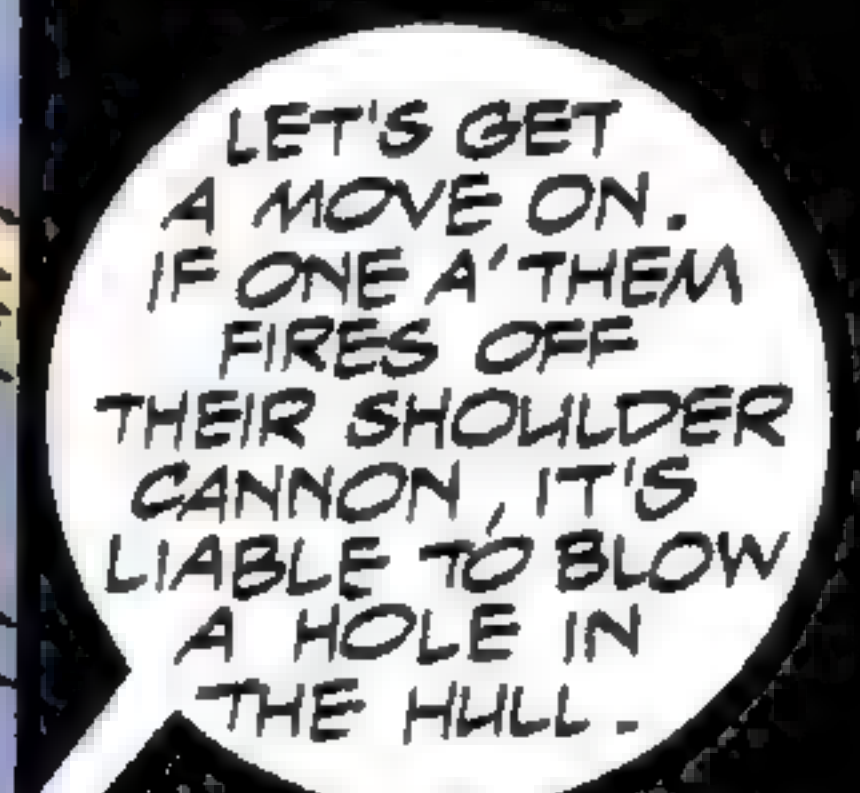
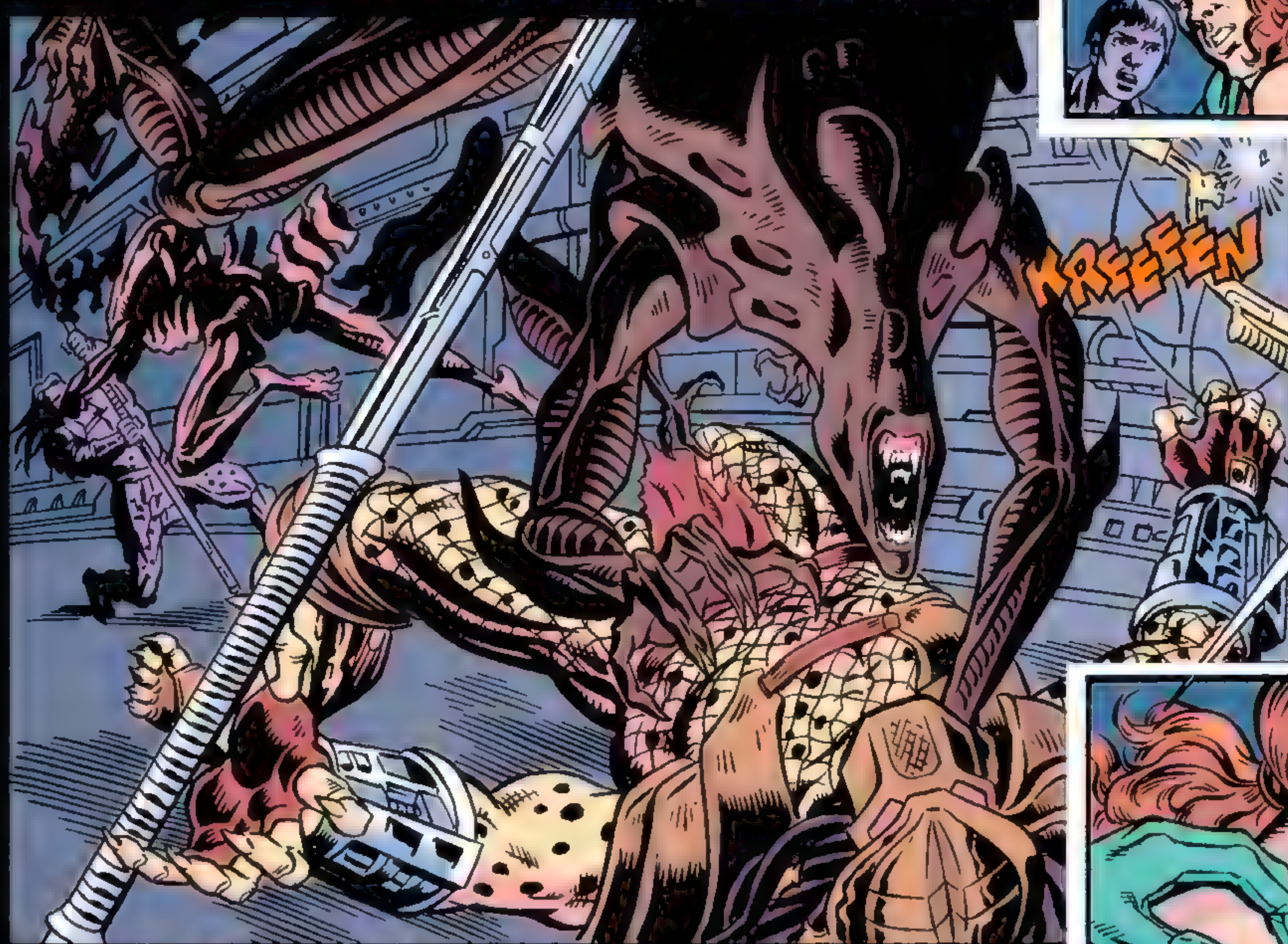
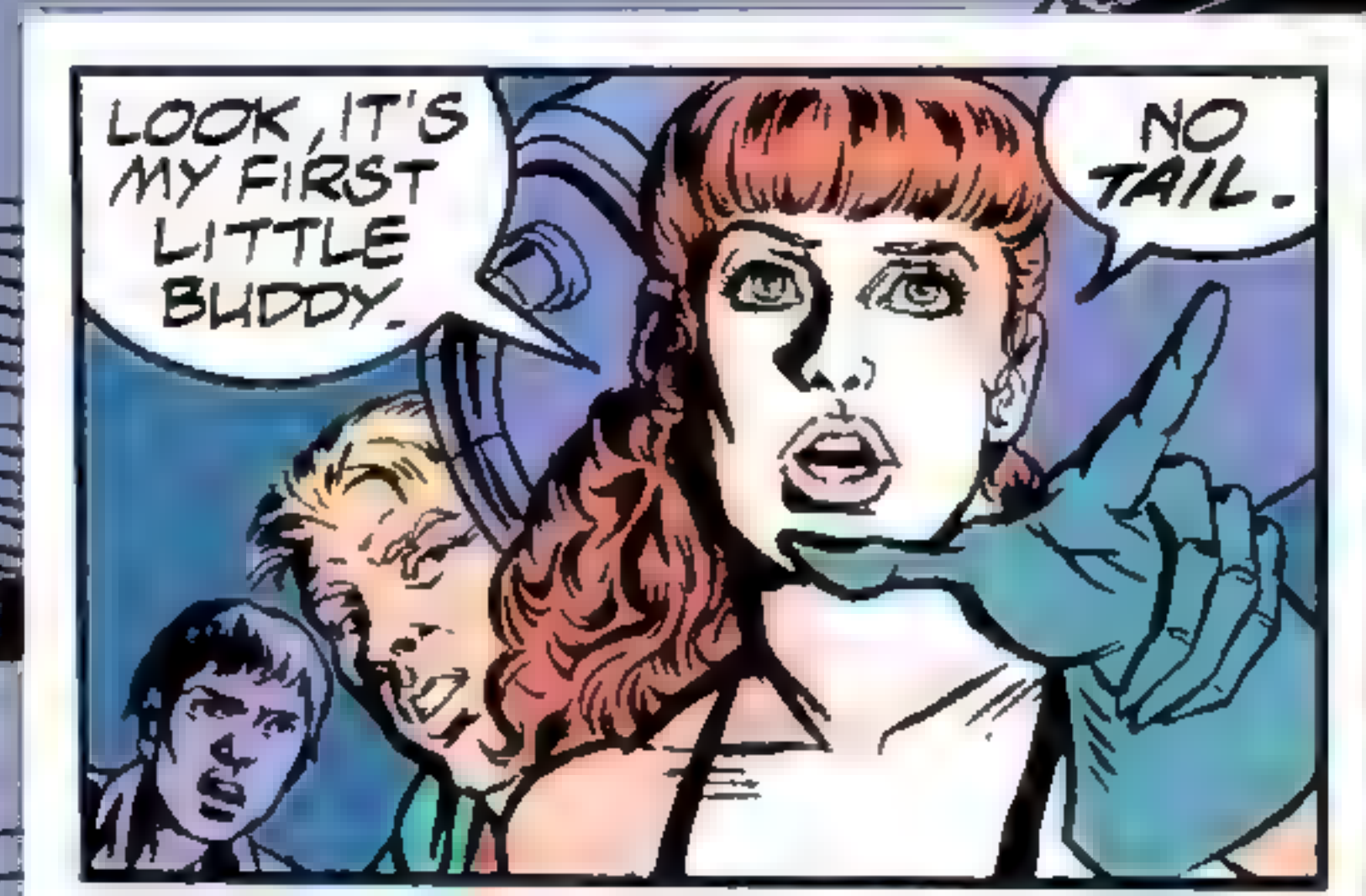
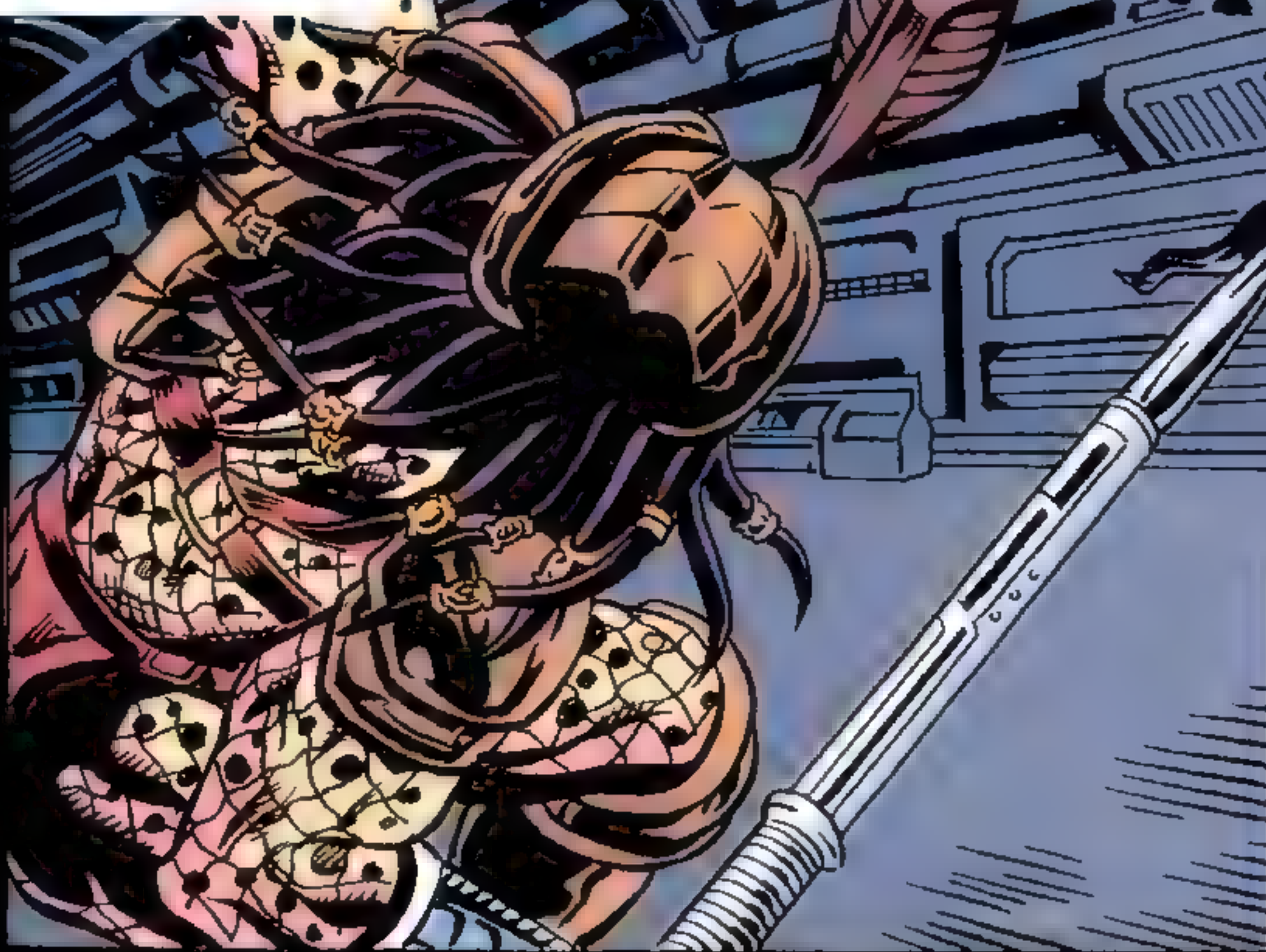
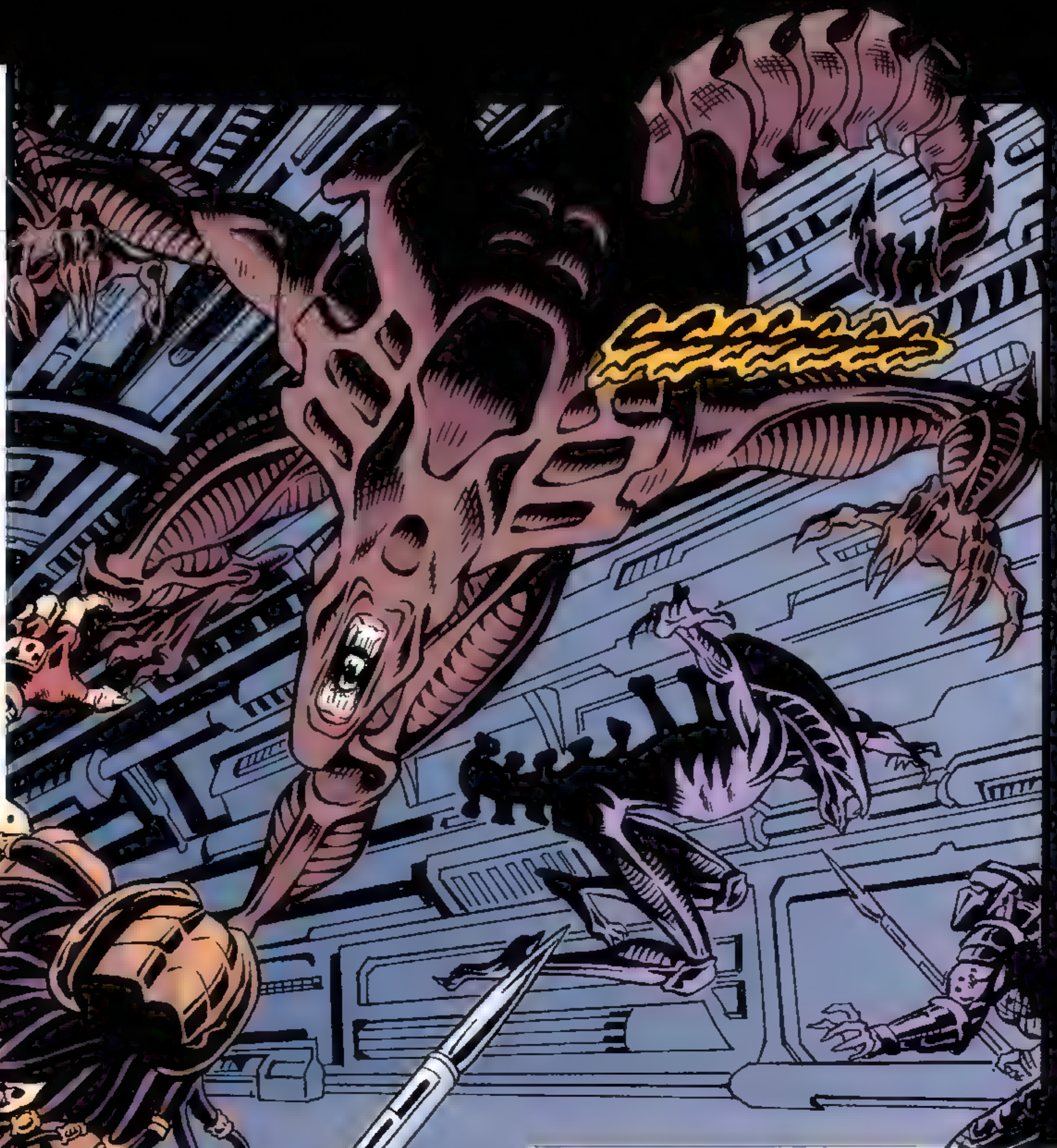
I,
MYSELF,
WANT TO DIE
PEACEFULLY
AT EIGHTY.

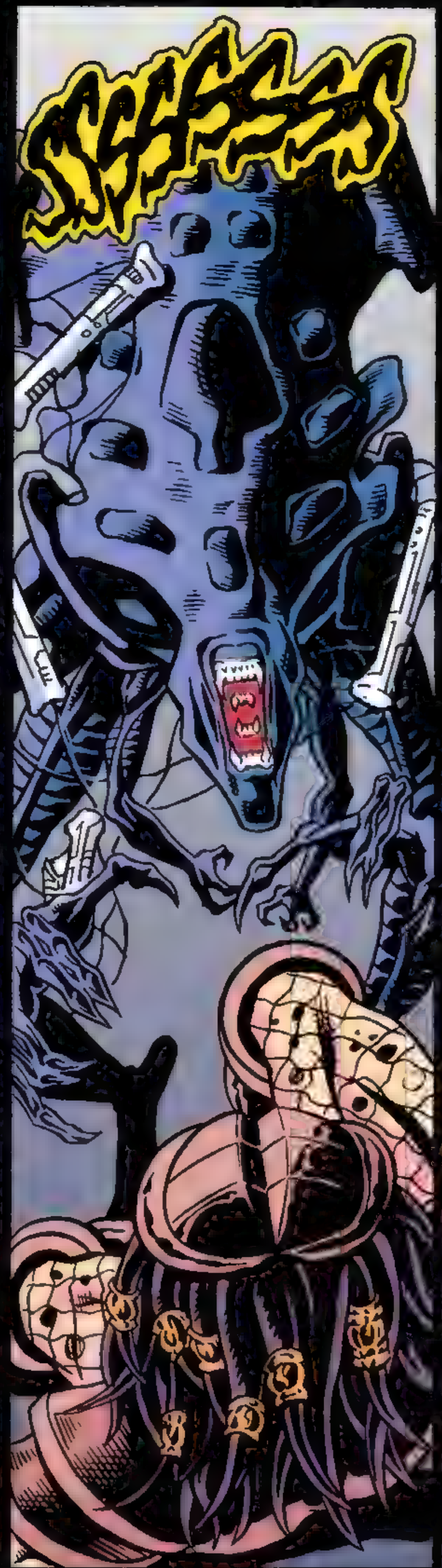
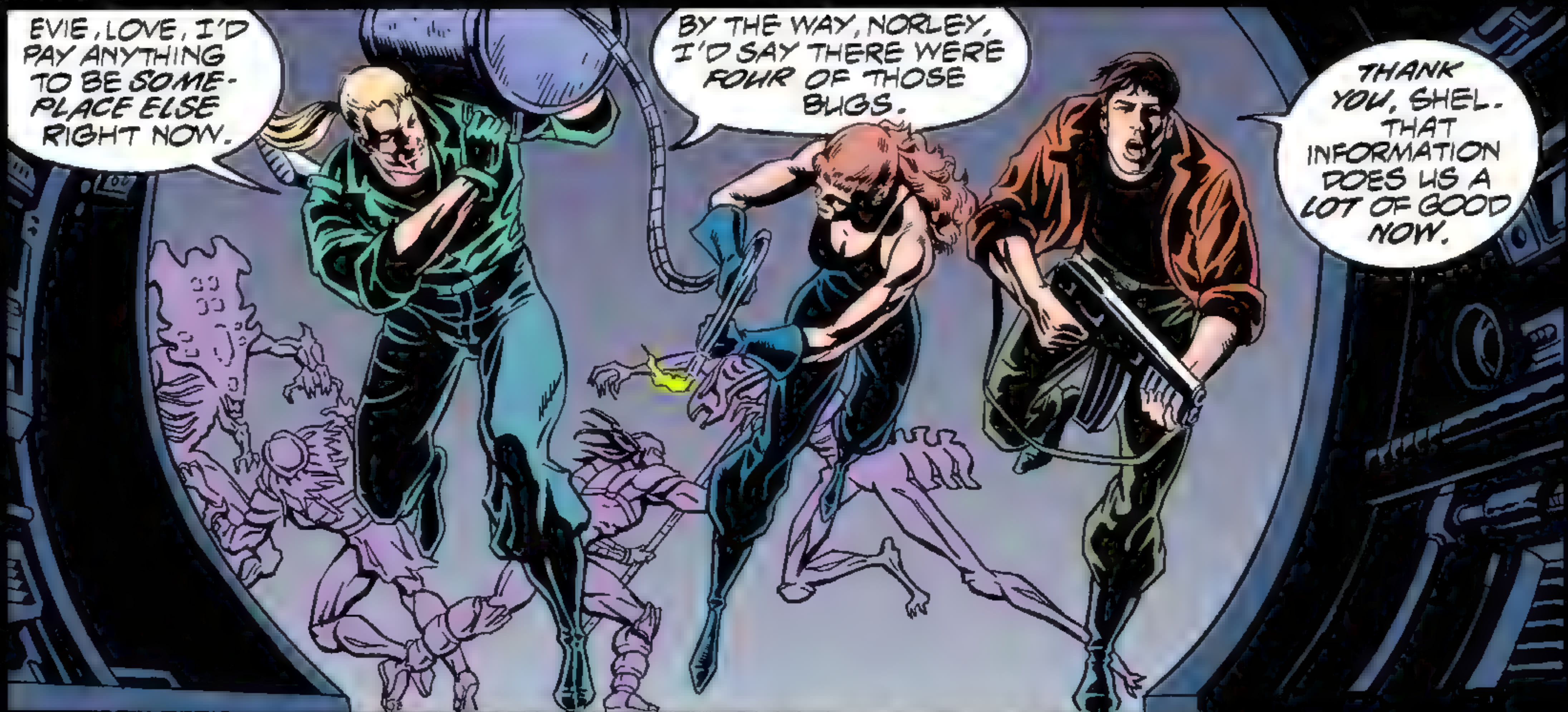


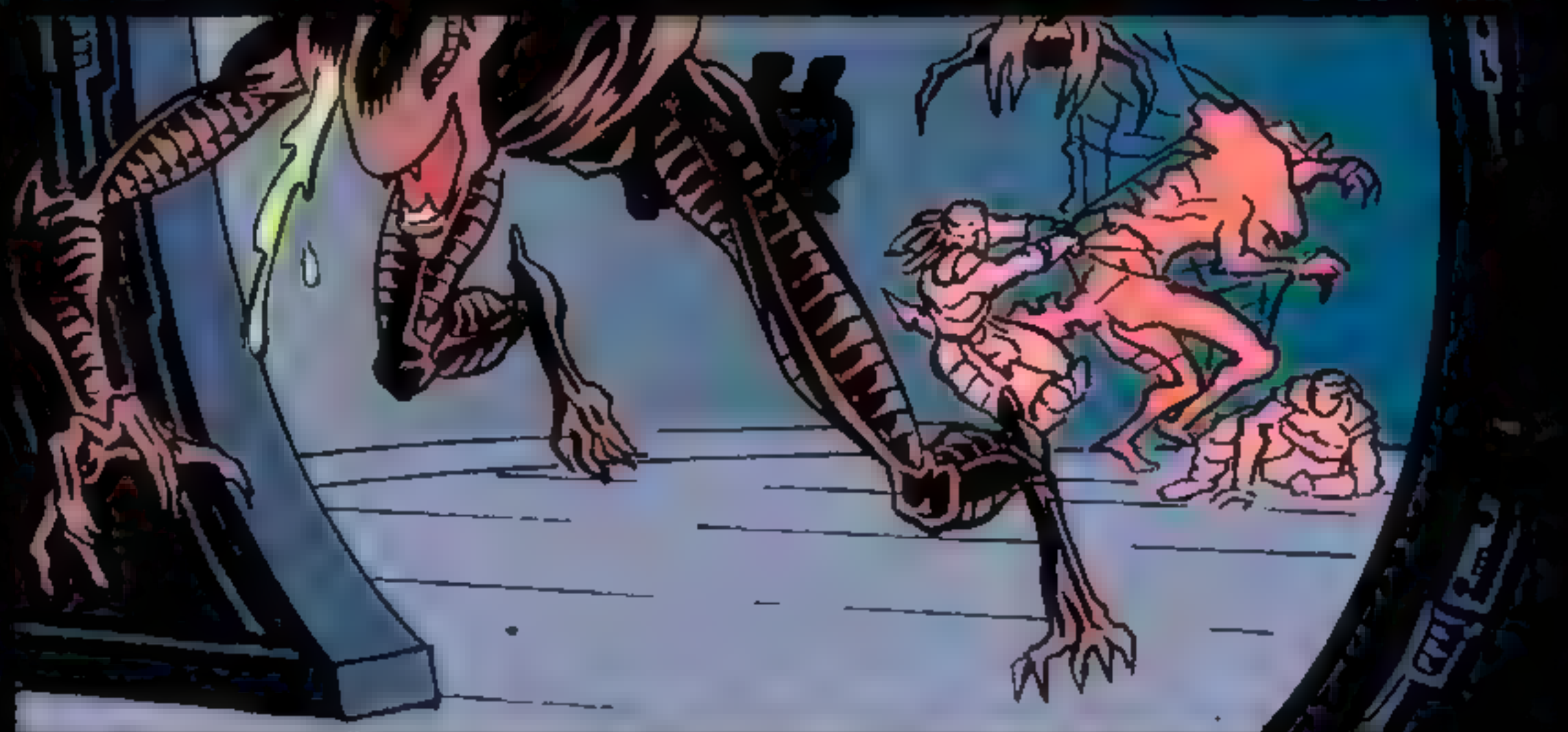
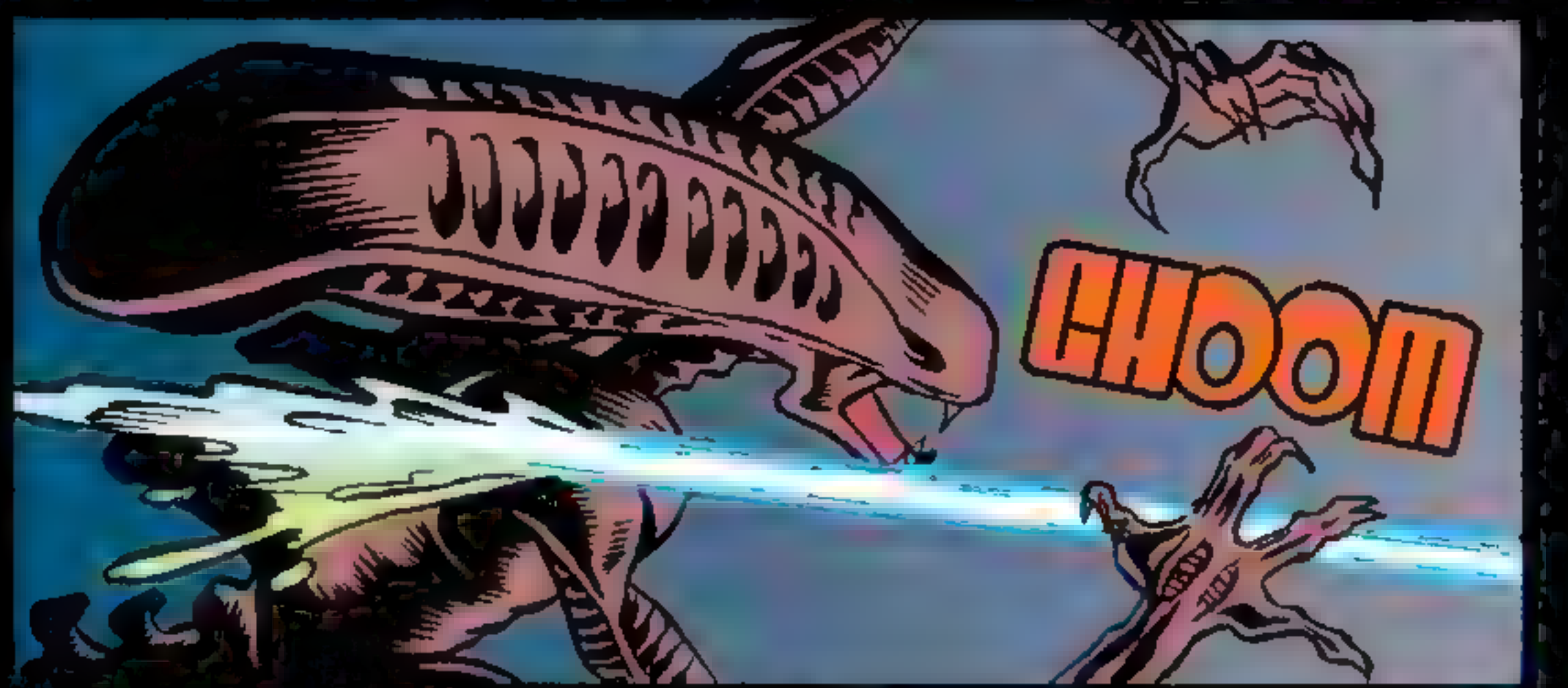
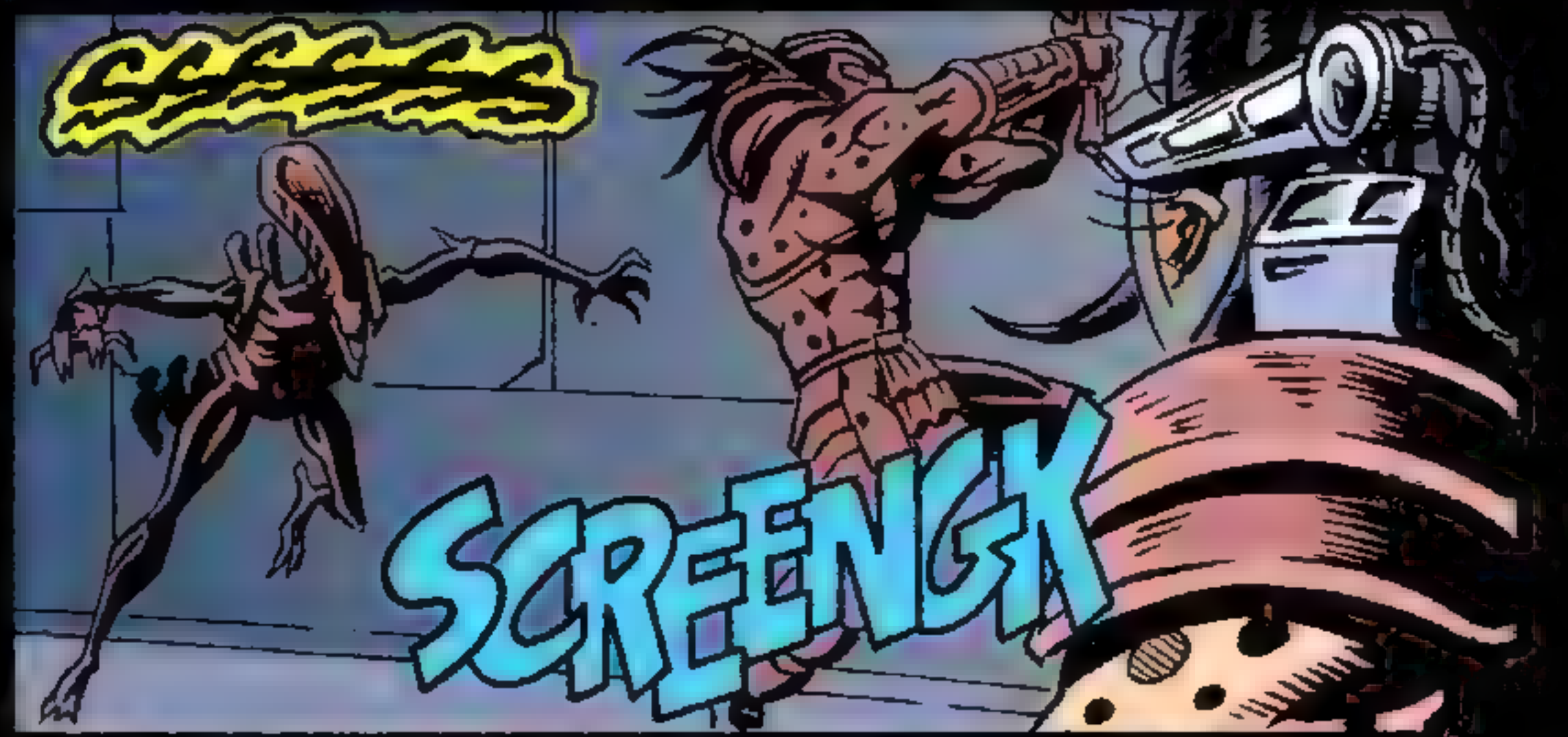
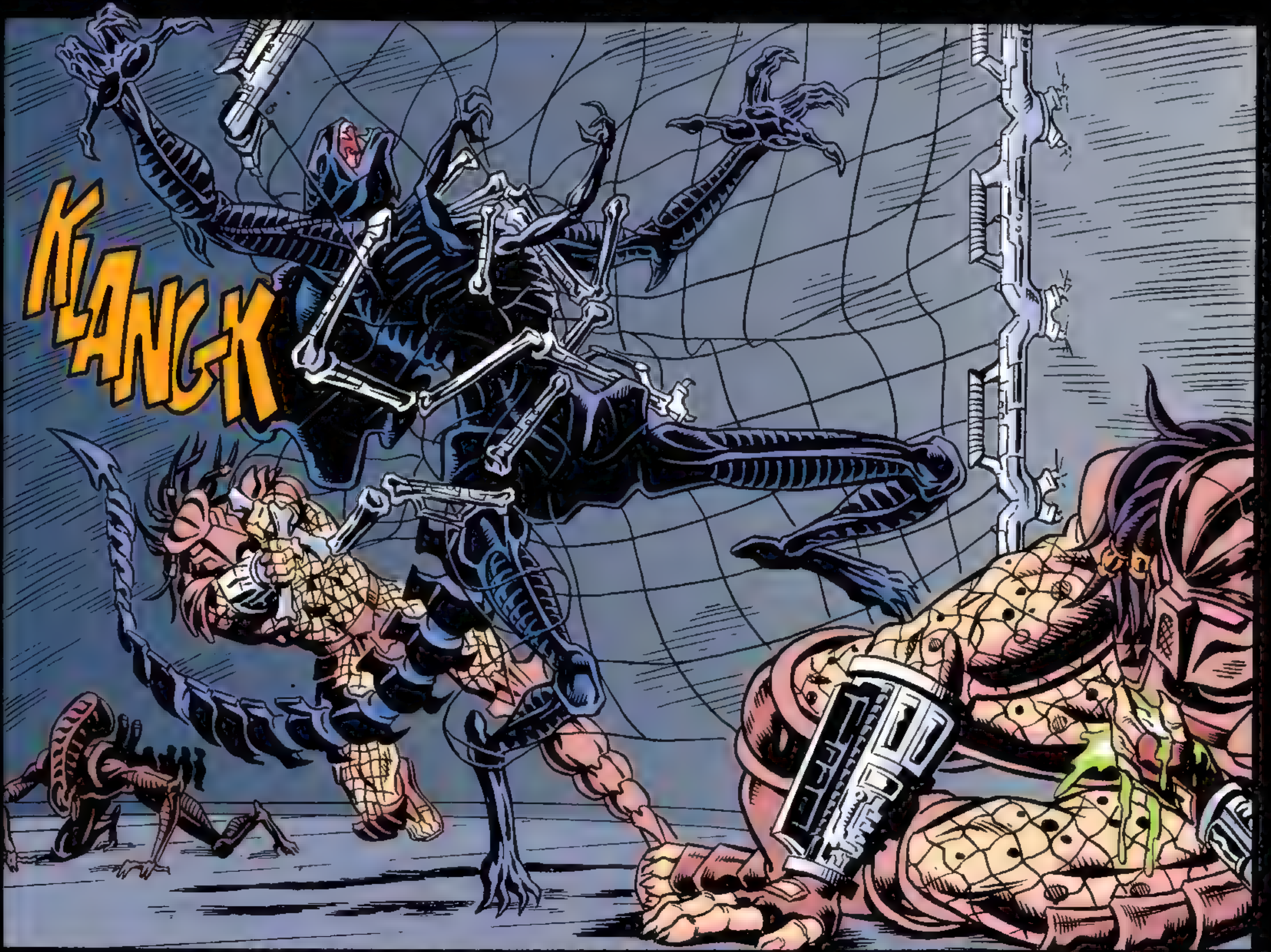
MIGHT
NOT BE AN
OPTION,
SHEL.

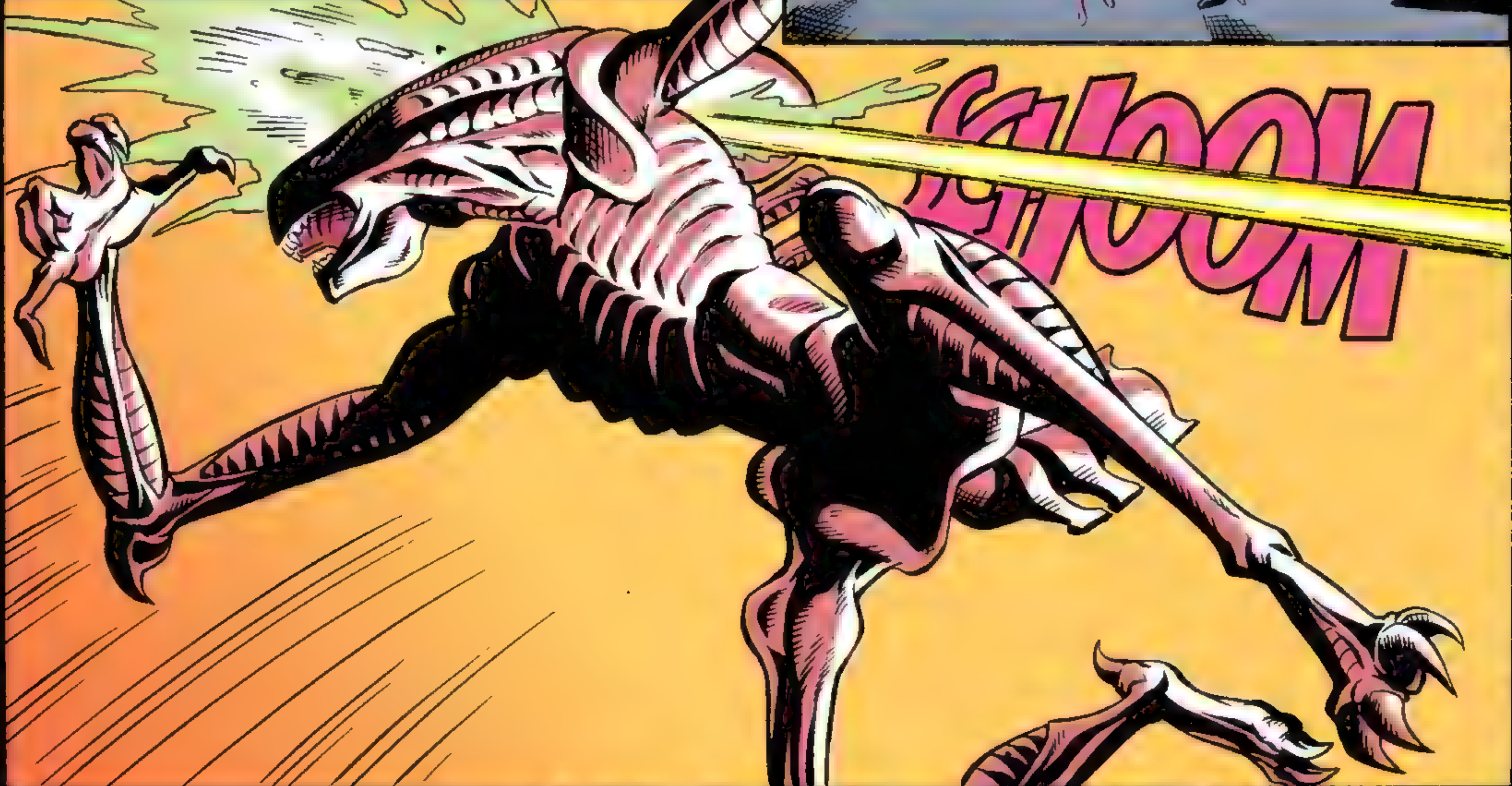
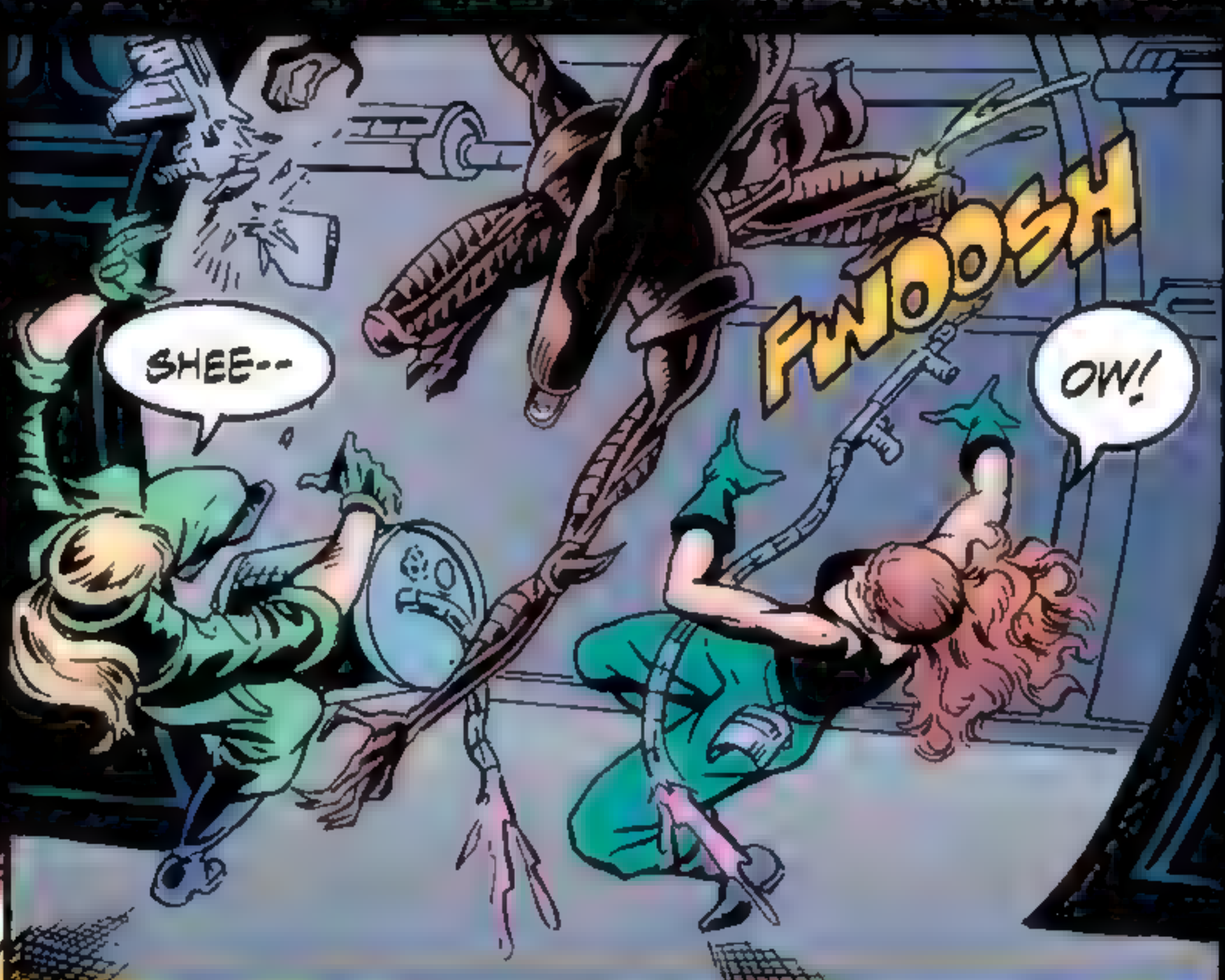
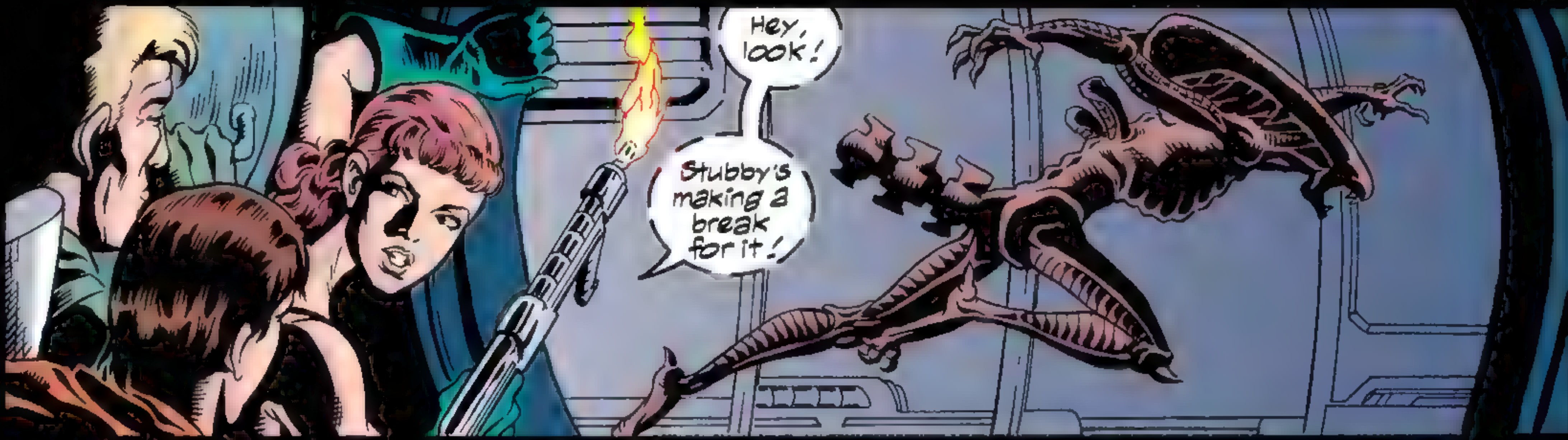




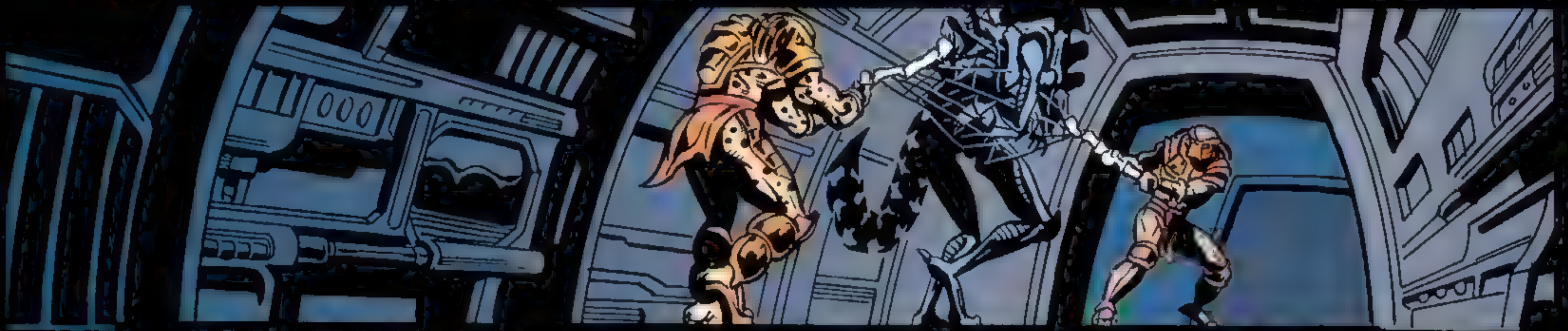
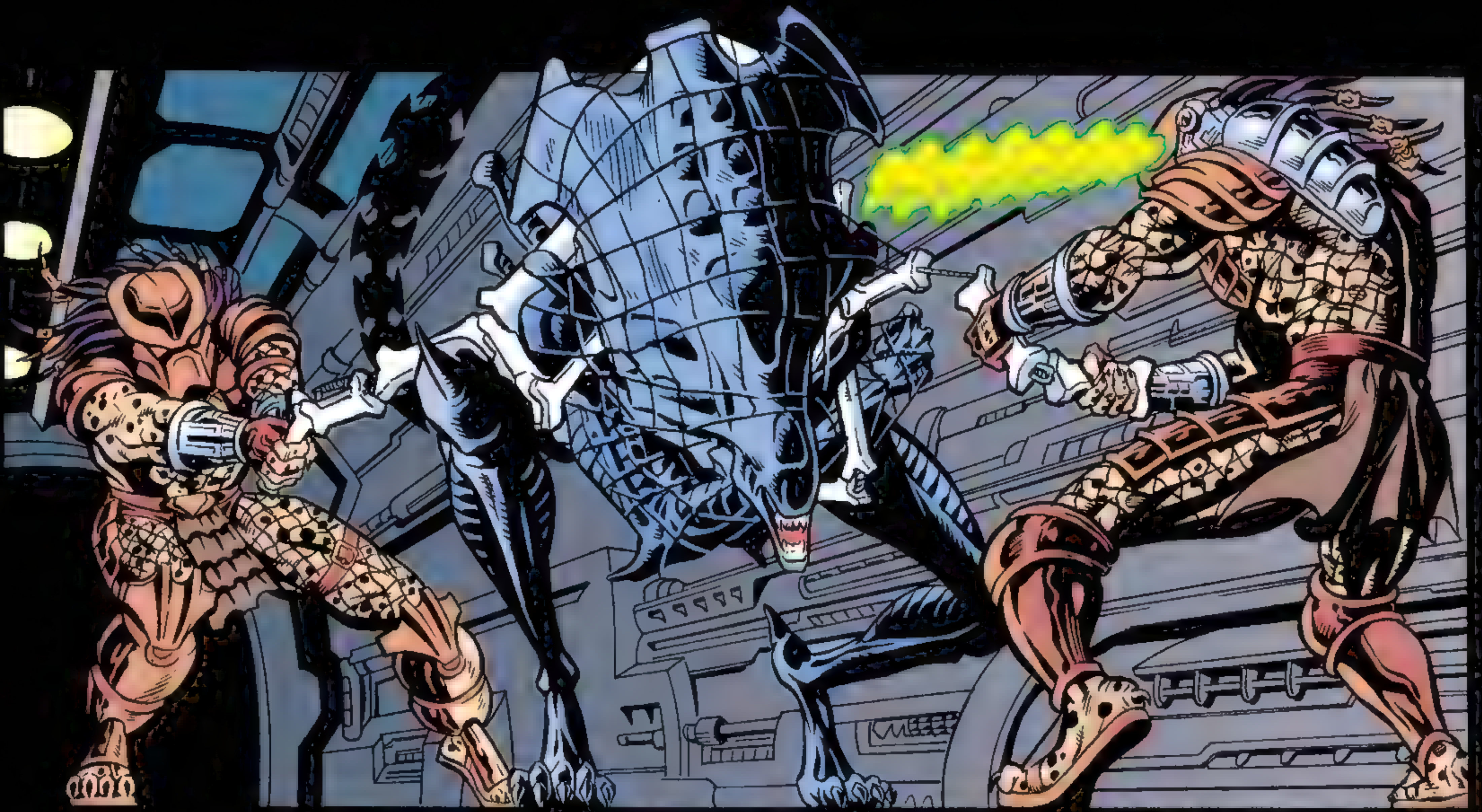


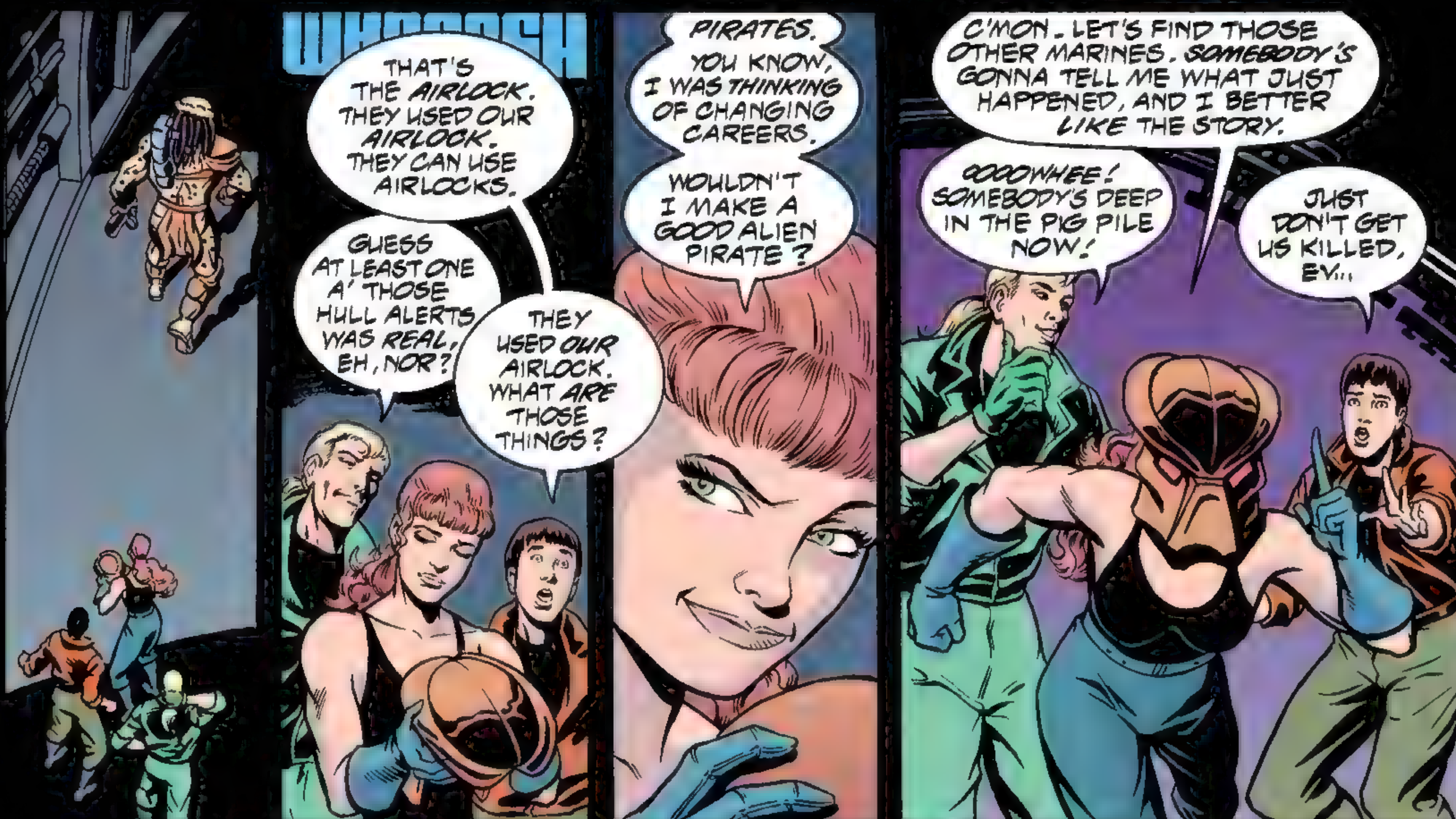












HELL-BENT



script/pencils
DAVID ROSS

inks
MARK LIPKA

colors
DAVE STEWART

lettering
MICHAEL TAYLOR

title illustration
JAE LEE with **DAVE STEWART**



I'M DONE FOR, AND
IN A WAY I NEVER
EXPECTED.

CHARON 13 IS A
DESOLATE RIMWORLD
IN A FORGOTTEN
SYSTEM.

MY NAME IS DAWN
MARSHALL. I LEAD A
CREW OF EIGHTEEN
ON A WORK RELIEF
DETAIL.

IT WAS FIVE
DAYS AGO THAT
WE LANDED IN
HELL.

I'VE FOUND
ANOTHER ONE,
KENNER! DONE
UP LIKE
MARSHALL!

HELL-BENT

ALIENS HANDED ME
A DEATH SENTENCE.
BUT, I'VE NEVER BEEN
A QUITTER.

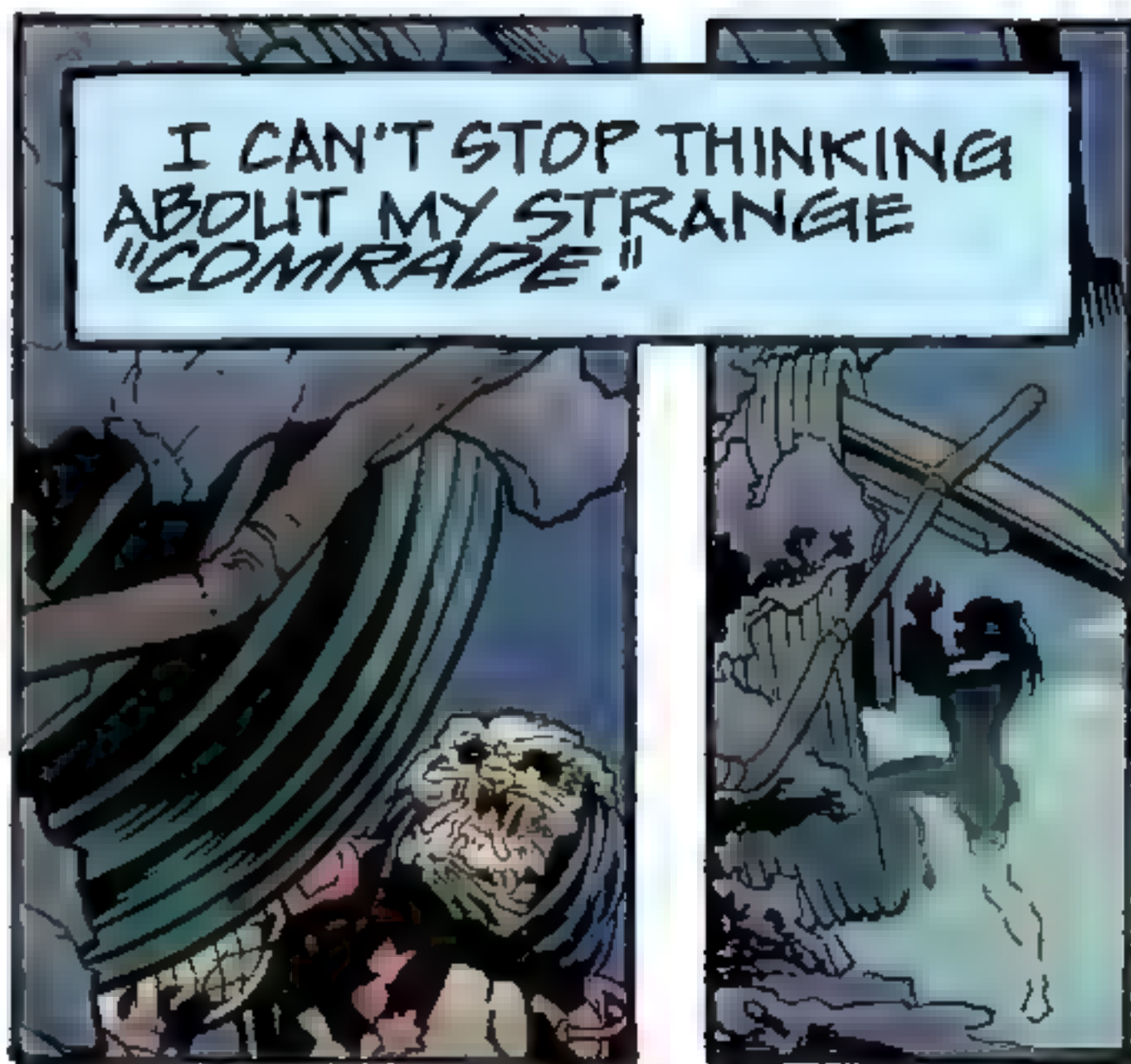
...UUUHHH...

I'VE GOT
MARSHALL,
JAG!

HE SURE
ISN'T ONE
OF OURS.

WHATEVER
THAT
THING IS...

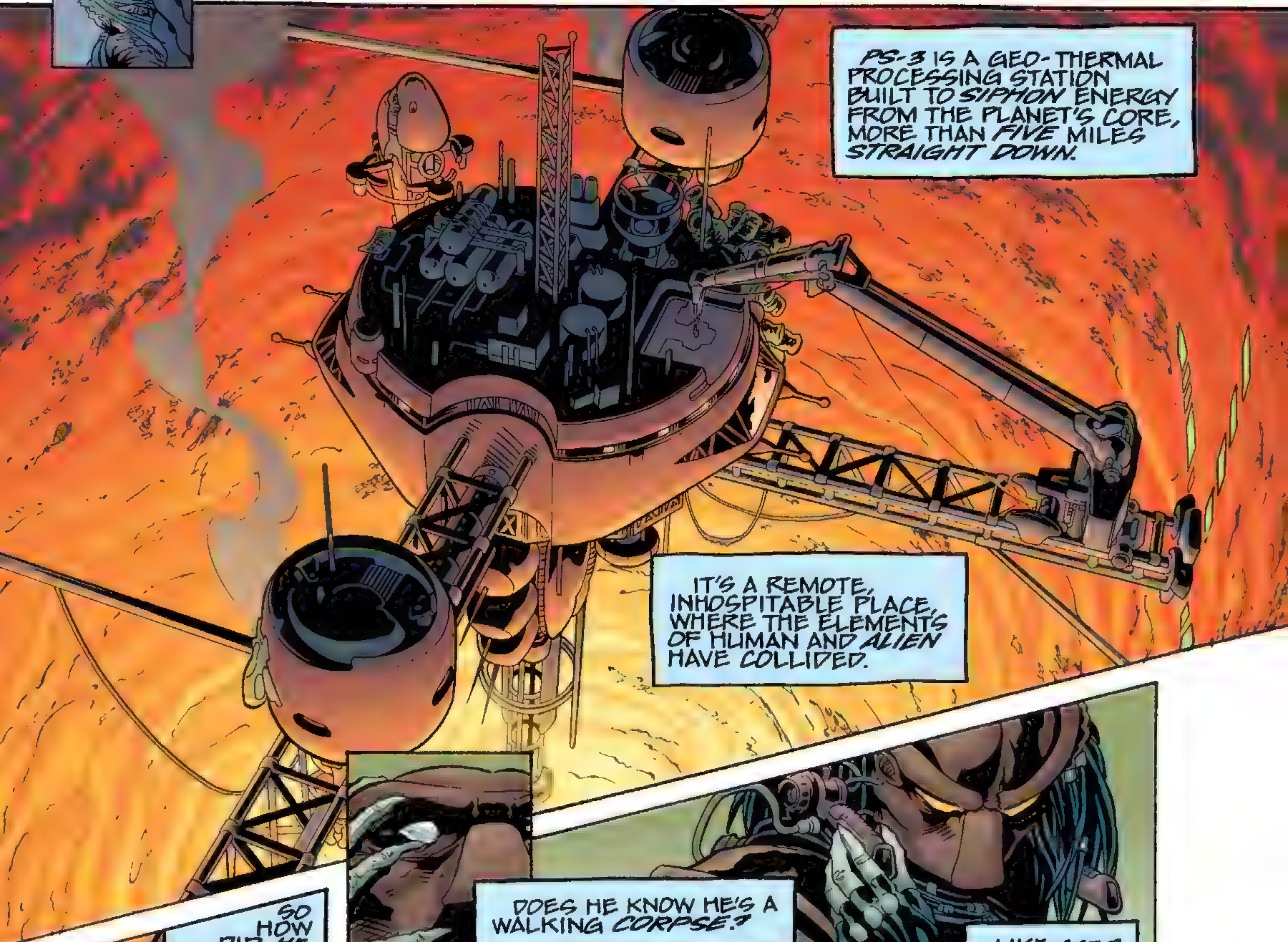
"...IT'S ON
ITS OWN!"



I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT MY STRANGE "COMRADE."

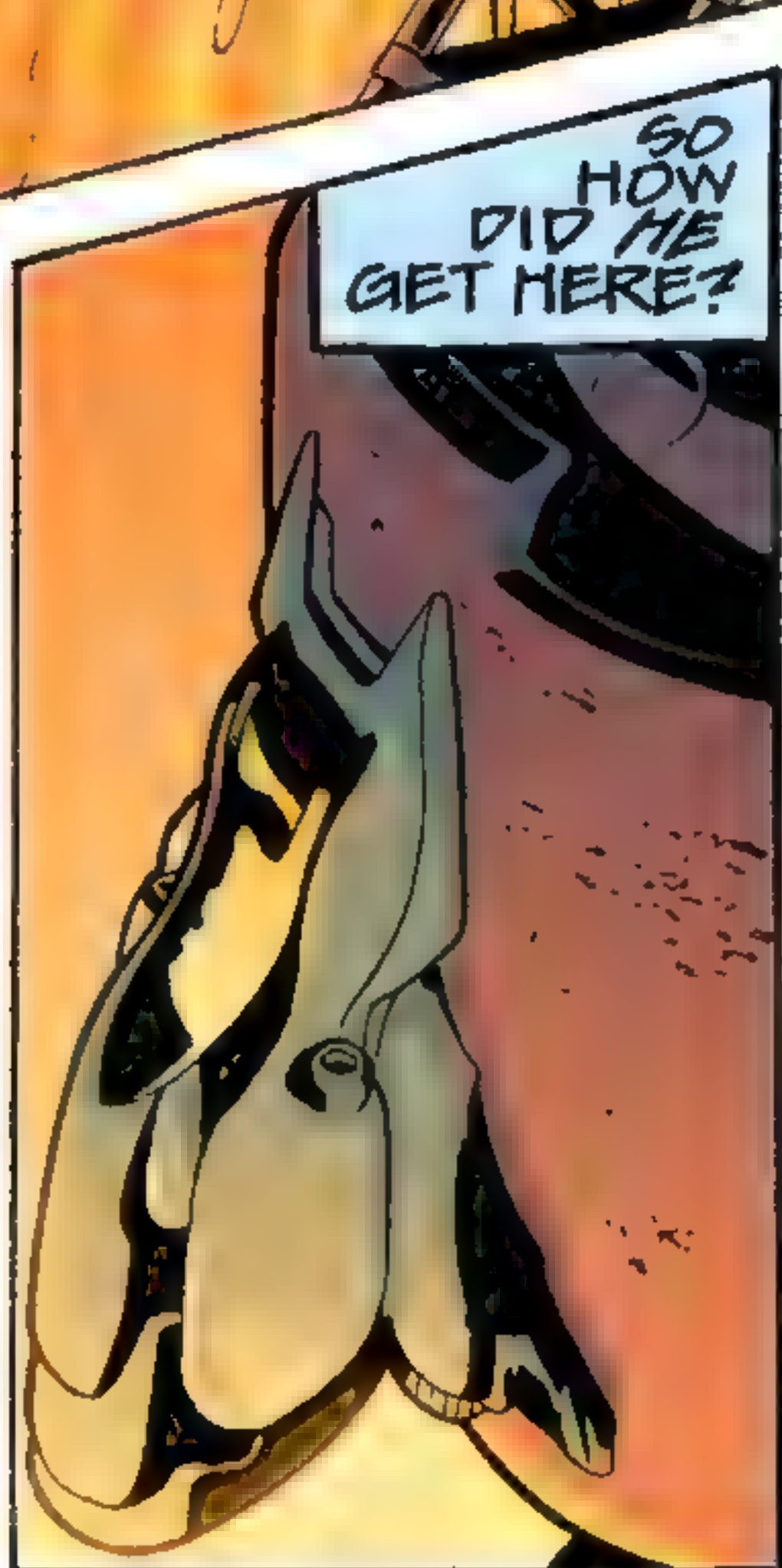


WHY COME TO THIS PLACE TO DIE?



PS-3 IS A GEO-THERMAL PROCESSING STATION BUILT TO SIPHON ENERGY FROM THE PLANET'S CORE, MORE THAN FIVE MILES STRAIGHT DOWN.

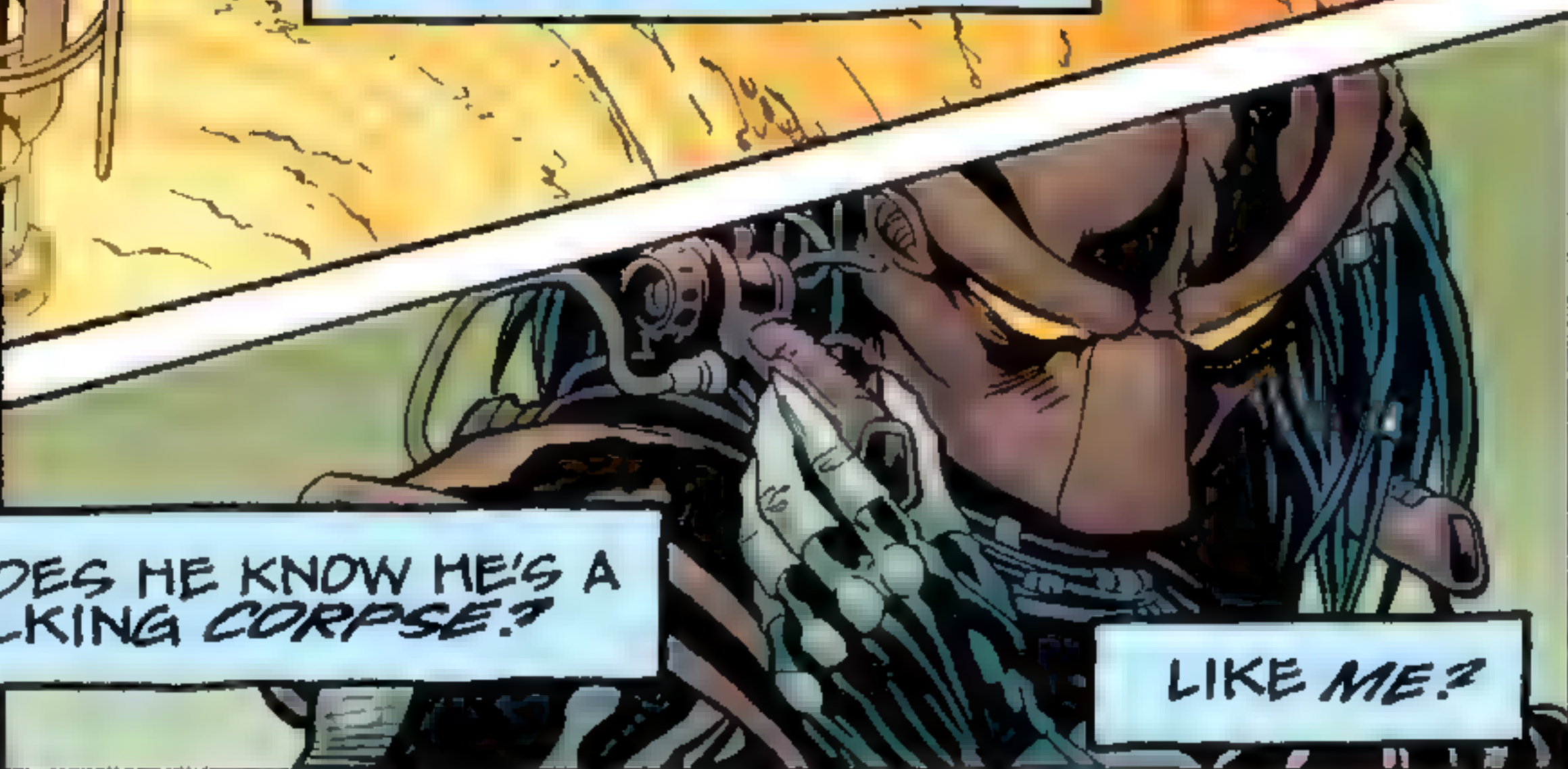
IT'S A REMOTE, INHOSPITABLE PLACE, WHERE THE ELEMENTS OF HUMAN AND ALIEN HAVE COLLIDED.



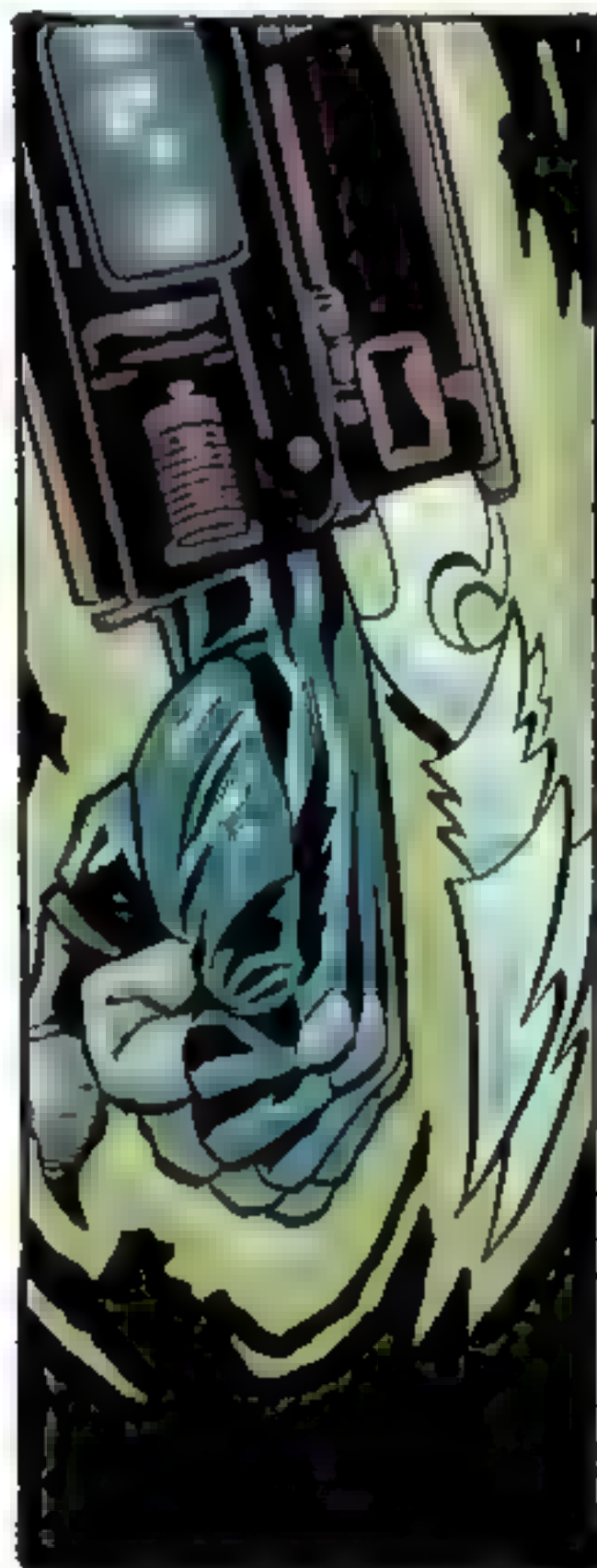
SO HOW DID HE GET HERE?



DOES HE KNOW HE'S A WALKING CORPSE?



LIKE ME?



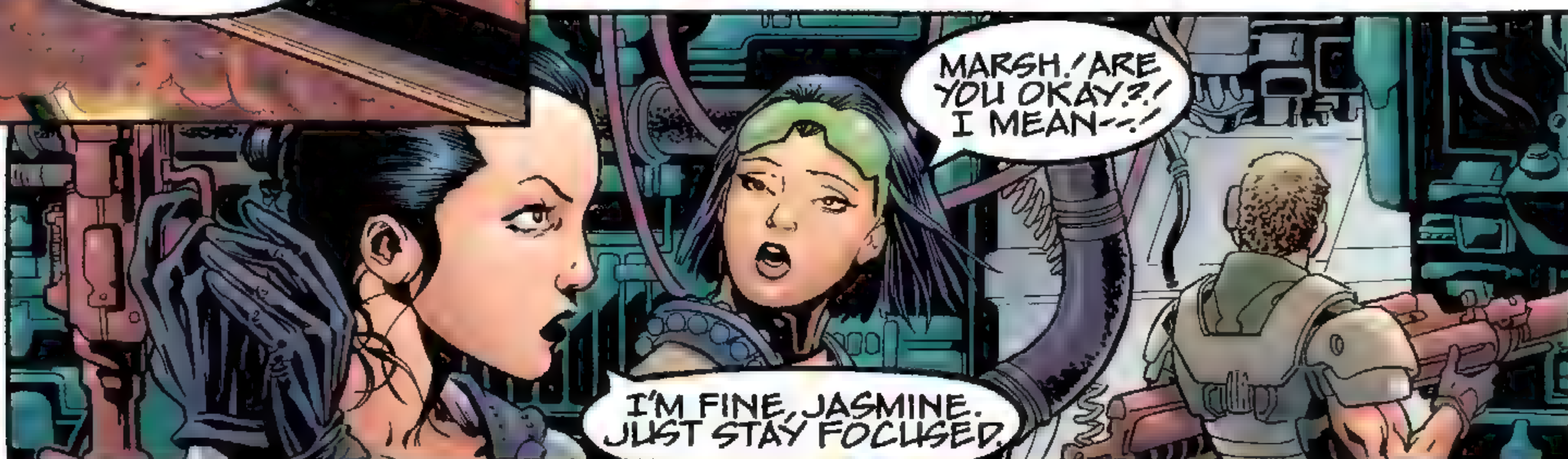
SEAL IT, KENNER!



WE'LL HAVE ENOUGH TO WORRY ABOUT ONCE WE'RE IN THE MAIN COMPLEX...



"...WITHOUT BEING FOLLOWED!"



MARSH, ARE YOU OKAY? I MEAN--

I'M FINE, JASMINE. JUST STAY FOCUSED.

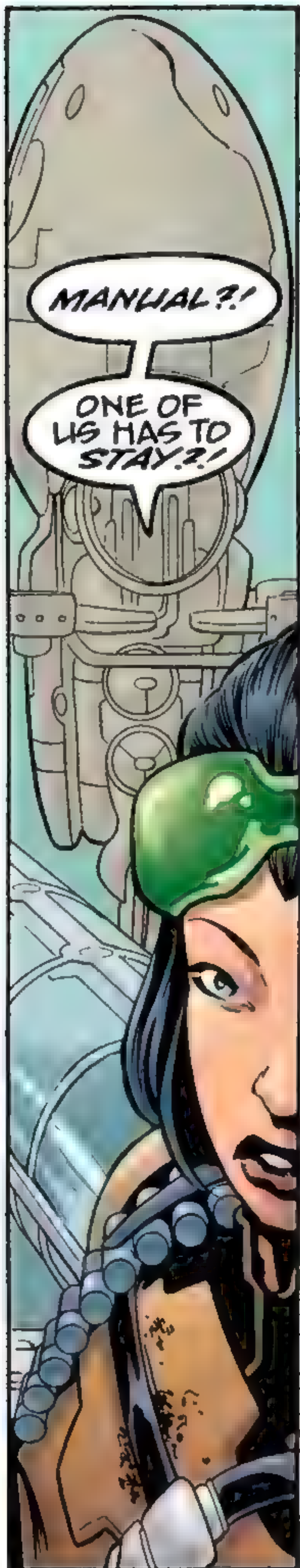
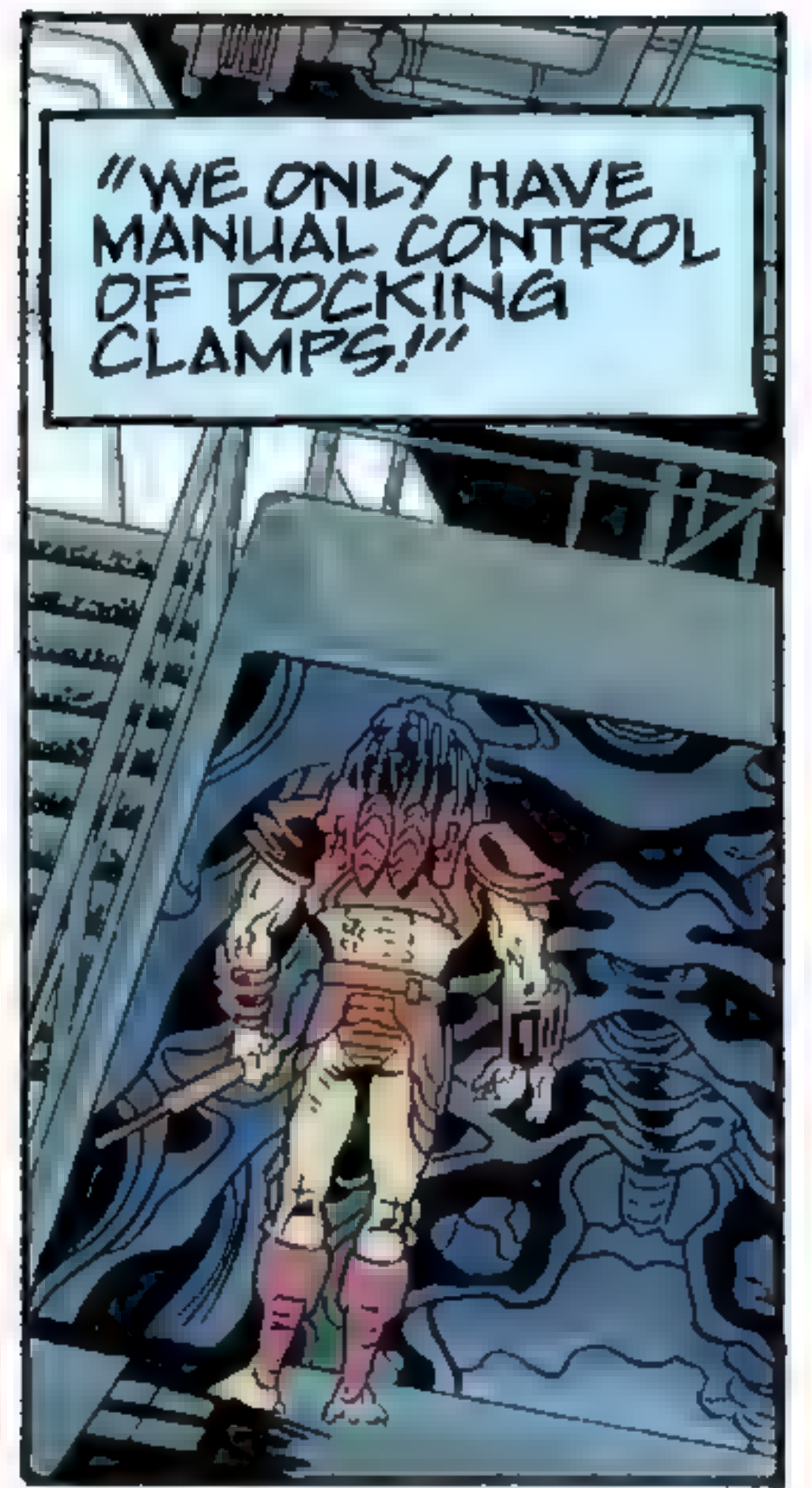


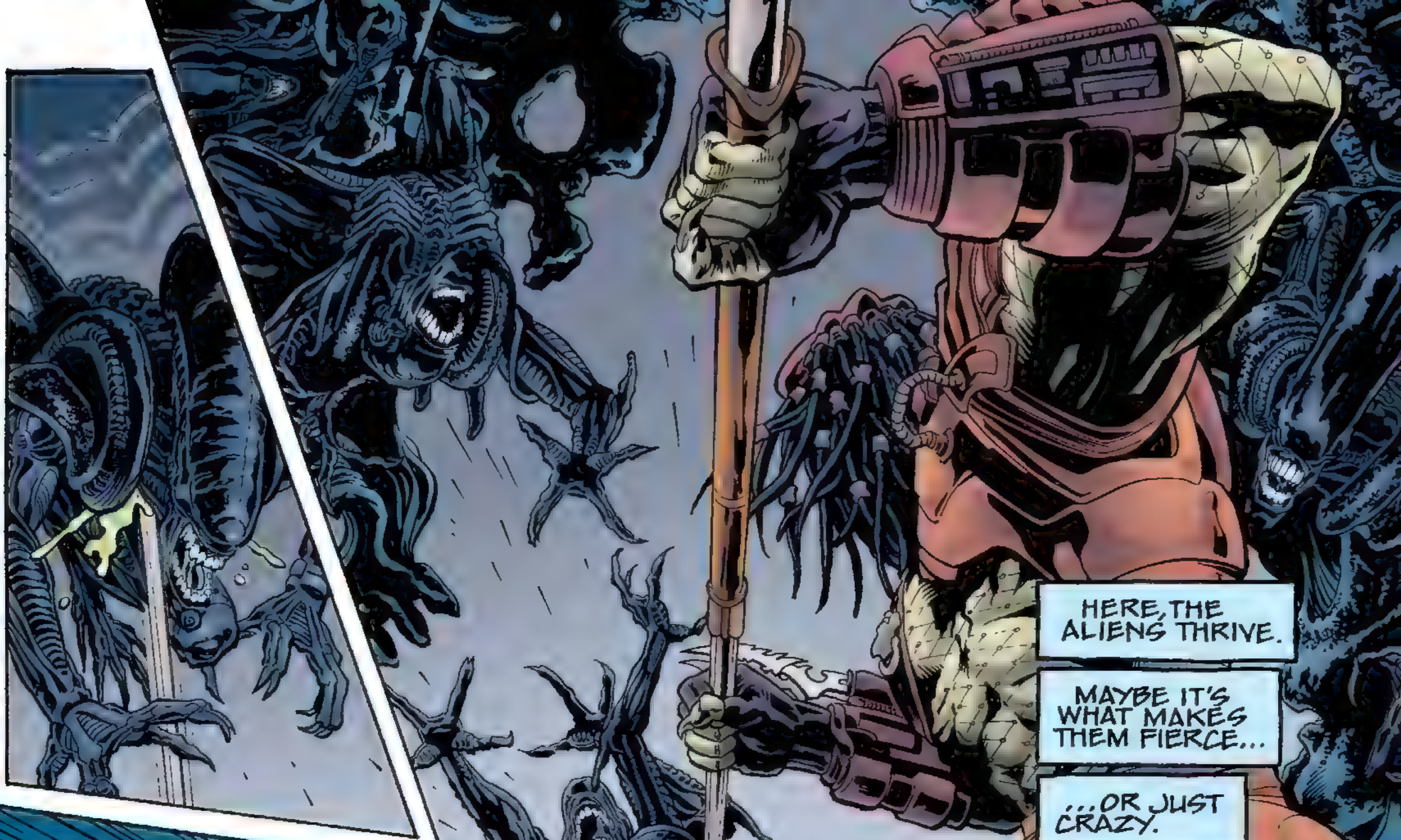
MY CREW HAS SPENT A WEEK IN THIS HELLHOLE.

THERE ARE ONLY THREE OF US LEFT.



I'M TIRED OF PLAYING THE VICTIM.





HERE, THE
ALIENS THRIVE.

MAYBE IT'S
WHAT MAKES
THEM FIERCE...

...OR JUST
CRAZY.

MAYBE THE HEAT
WILL GET ME FIRST.

AS FOR THE
LIVING...



WE ALL KNOW WHAT
YOU PULLED OFF MY
FACE...WHAT IT MEANS.



"GO GO, BOTH
OF YOU! AND
THE COMPANY..!"



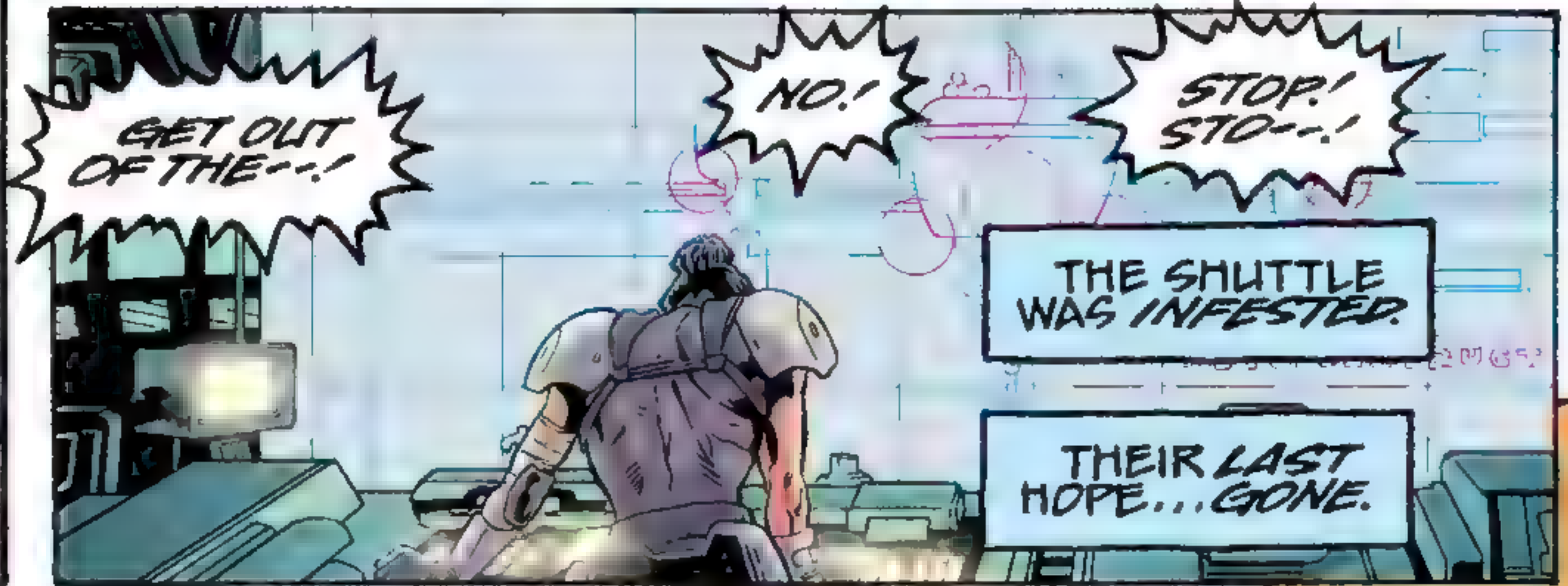
...TELL THEM
IT ALL WENT TO
HELL.



I FEEL MORE
THAN HEAR THE
EXPLOSIONS
BELOW.



THEN...
SOMETHING
ELSE.



GET OUT
OF THE--!

NO!

STOP!
STO--!

THE SHUTTLE
WAS INFESTED.

THEIR LAST
HOPE... GONE.



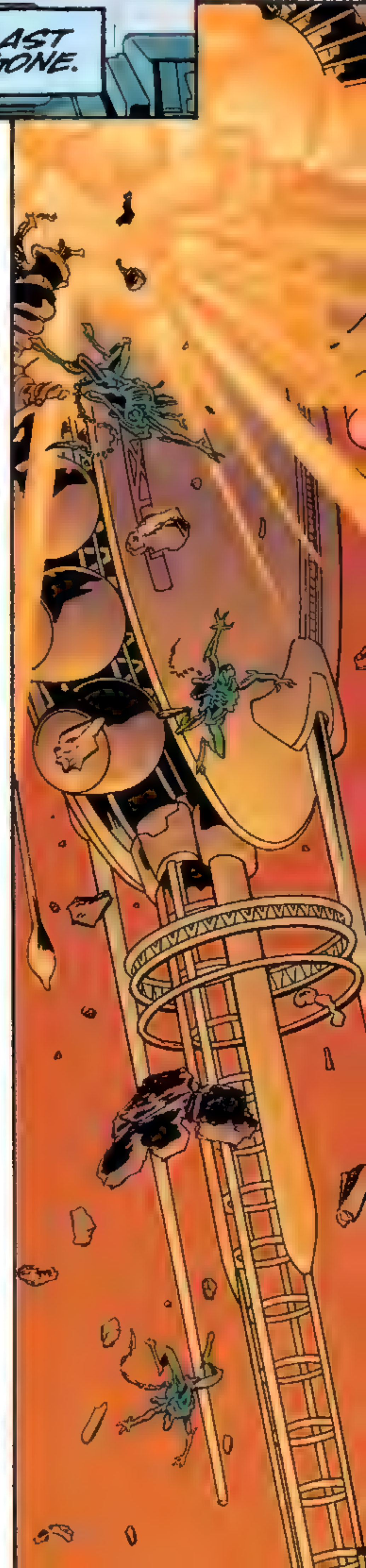
I THINK I'M
ALL ALONE, BUT
THE STATION
SHAKES AGAIN.

MY "COMRADE."



PERHAPS HE CAME
FOR SPORT...

...DRAWN IN BY
OUR DISTRESS
BEACON.

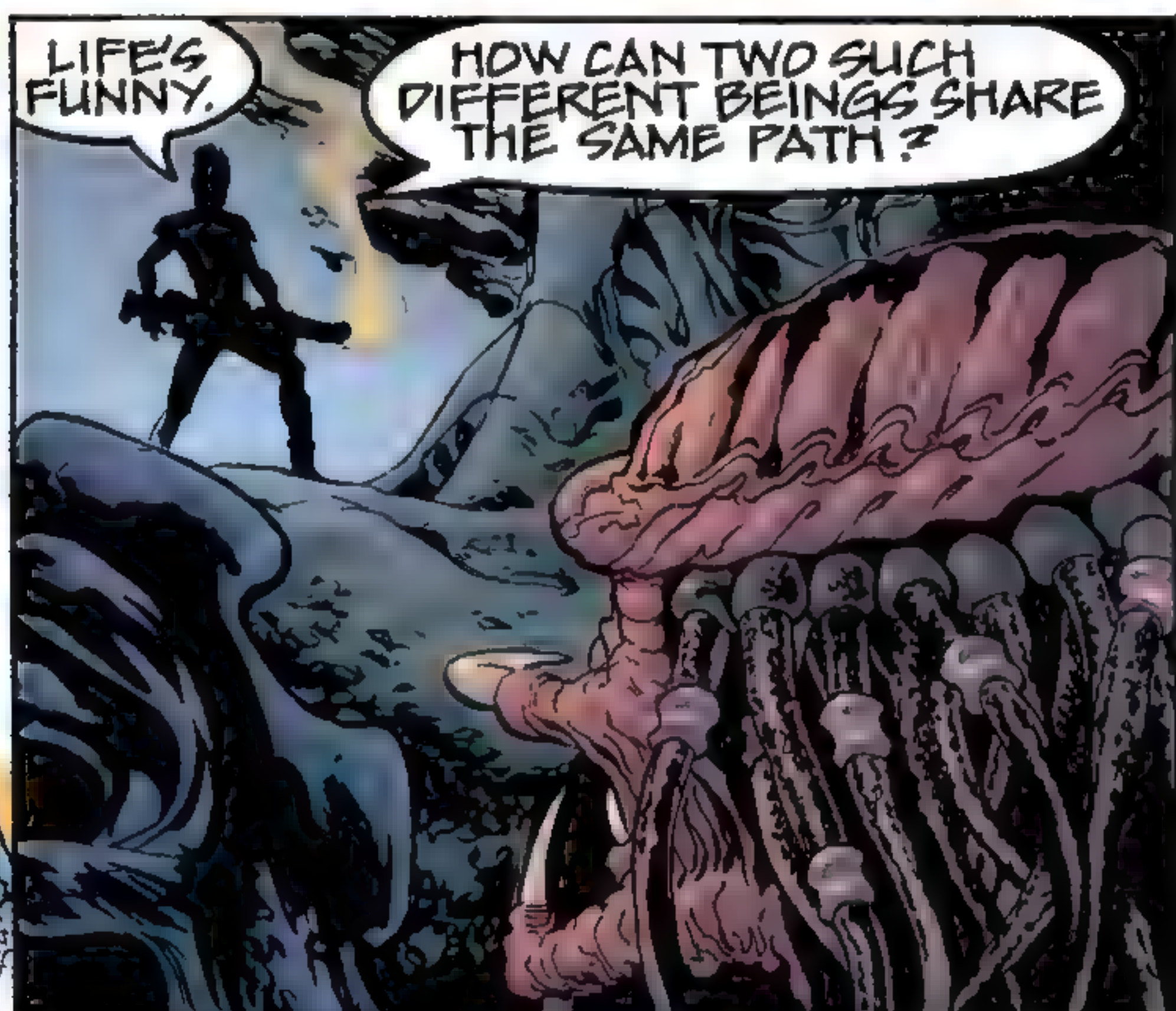




BUT...HE WAS SIMPLY OVERWHELMED.

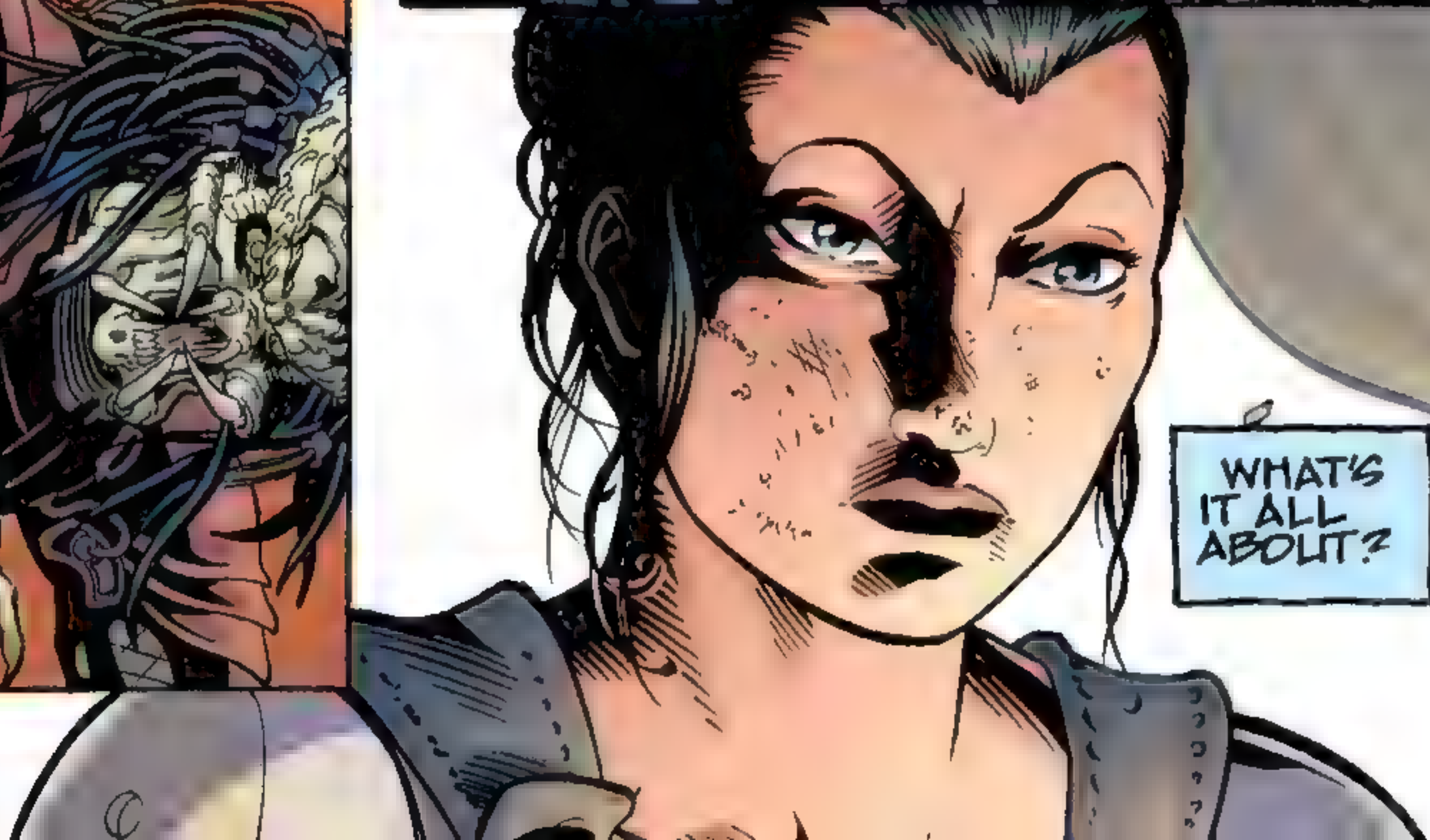


NOW HE'S PAID THE PRICE.

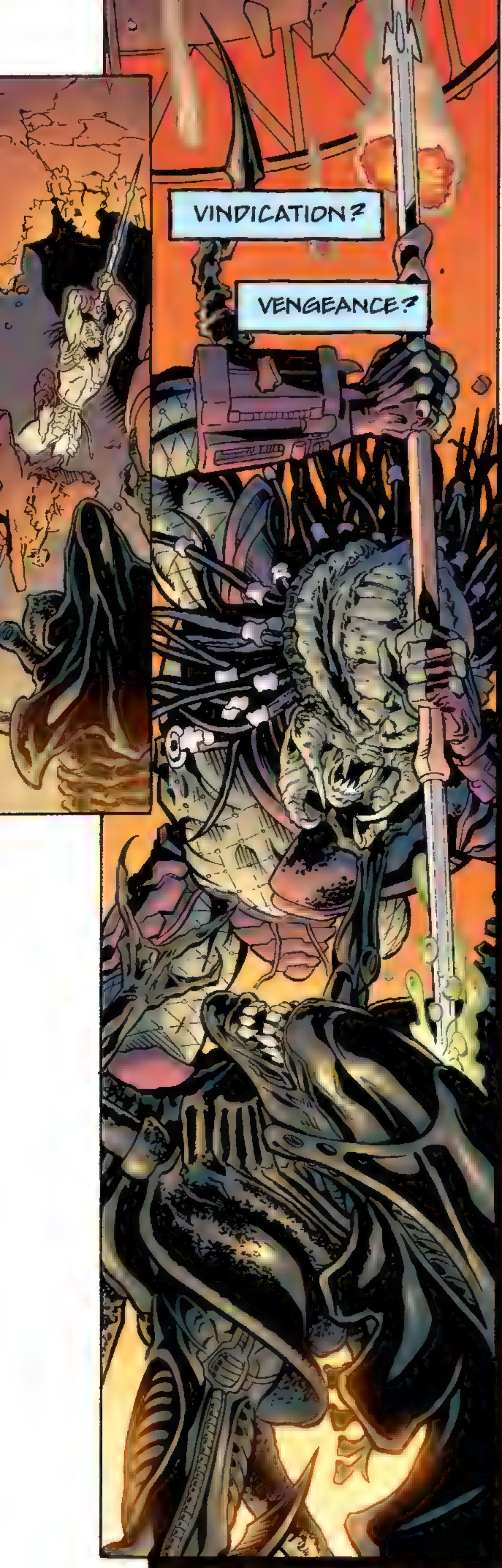


LIFE'S FUNNY.

HOW CAN TWO SUCH DIFFERENT BEINGS SHARE THE SAME PATH?



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

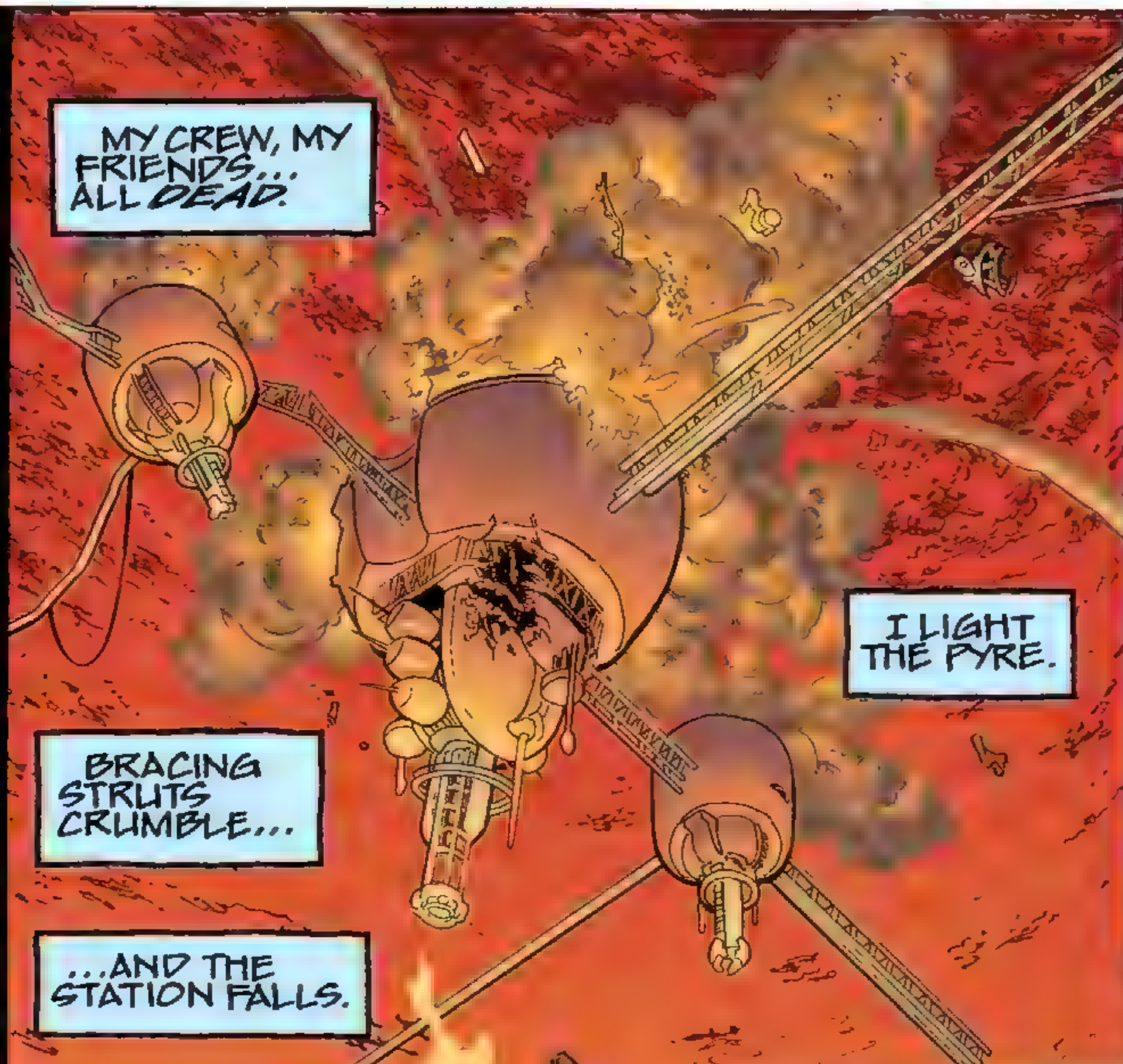


VINDICATION?

VENGEANCE?



A GOOD
DEATH?



MY CREW, MY
FRIENDS...
ALL DEAD.

I LIGHT
THE PYRE.

BRACING
STRUTS
CRUMBLE...

...AND THE
STATION FALLS.

AN ALIEN
STIRS
INSIDE ME.

TOO LATE.

THIS ENDS
HERE...
WITH ME.



PURSUIT



script

IAN EDGINTON

pencils

MEL RUBI

inks

ROB HUNTER

colors

DAVE STEWART

lettering

SEAN KONOT

title illustration

DANIEL TORRES with **DAVE STEWART**



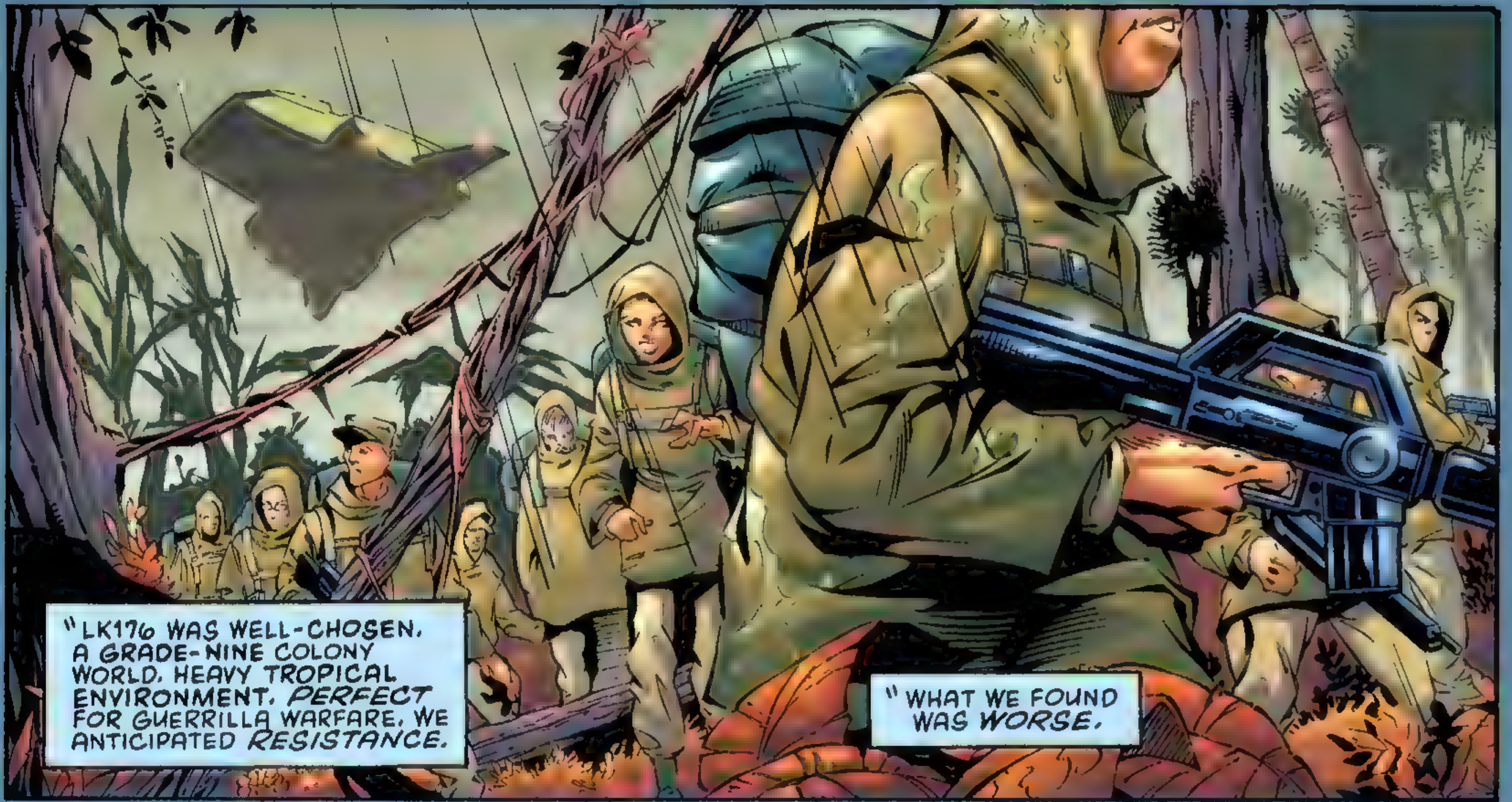
"ATTENTION. THIS BOARD OF INQUIRY OF THE ADELAIDE AND BOMBAY HOLDING ALLIANCE IS NOW IN SESSION. CAPTAIN LOTUS HERNANDEZ, TAKE THE STAND."

CAPTAIN, PLEASE EXPLAIN TO THE BOARD THE EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE ON LK176, RESULTING IN THE LOSS OF YOUR ENTIRE UNIT.

SIR, AS YOU'RE AWARE FROM MY REPORT, MY TEAM WAS ONE OF SEVERAL DESIGNATED THE TASK OF REACQUIRING THE SUBJECT.

PURSUIT

I RECIEVED A REPORT OF SQUATTERS ON LK176 WHO FIT THE PROFILE OF HER AND HER FOLLOWERS. WE SCRAMBLED ASAP.



"LK176 WAS WELL-CHOSEN, A GRADE-NINE COLONY WORLD. HEAVY TROPICAL ENVIRONMENT. PERFECT FOR GUERRILLA WARFARE. WE ANTICIPATED RESISTANCE.

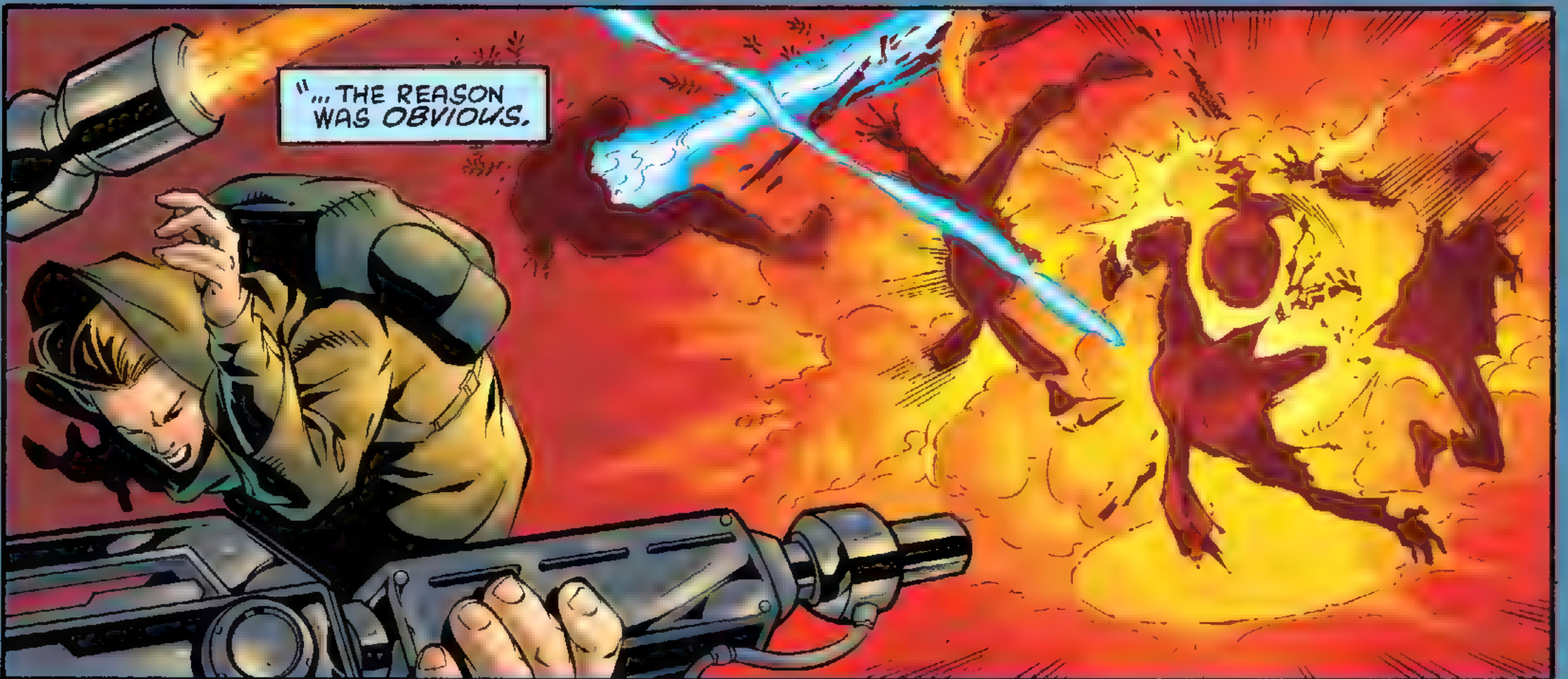
"WHAT WE FOUND WAS WORSE.



"THE MEN WERE LEPERS, THE SUBJECT'S PEOPLE.



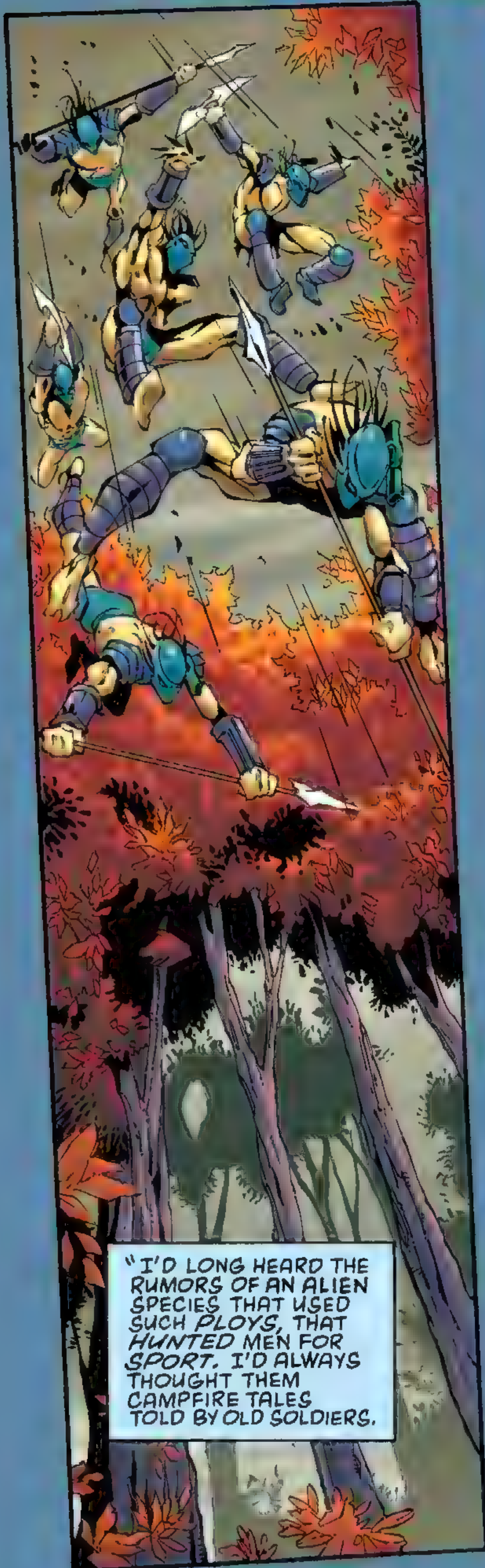
"THEY WERE ALIVE, THEIR LARYNXES CRUSHED TO PREVENT THEIR CALLING OUT...



"...THE REASON WAS OBVIOUS.



"THEY WERE
BAIT!"



"I'D LONG HEARD THE
RUMORS OF AN ALIEN
SPECIES THAT USED
SUCH PLOYS, THAT
HUNTED MEN FOR
SPORT. I'D ALWAYS
THOUGHT THEM
CAMPFIRE TALES
TOLD BY OLD SOLDIERS."



"THESE WERE
REAL ENOUGH."



"THEY
BUTCHERED
MY MEN LIKE
CATTLE!"



"THEY WERE ALL OVER US. ONE OF THEM OPENED MY FACE..."



"I WAS LUCKY. WE WERE NOTHING TO THEM."

"... IT TOOK AN ENTIRE CLIP TO BRING IT DOWN."



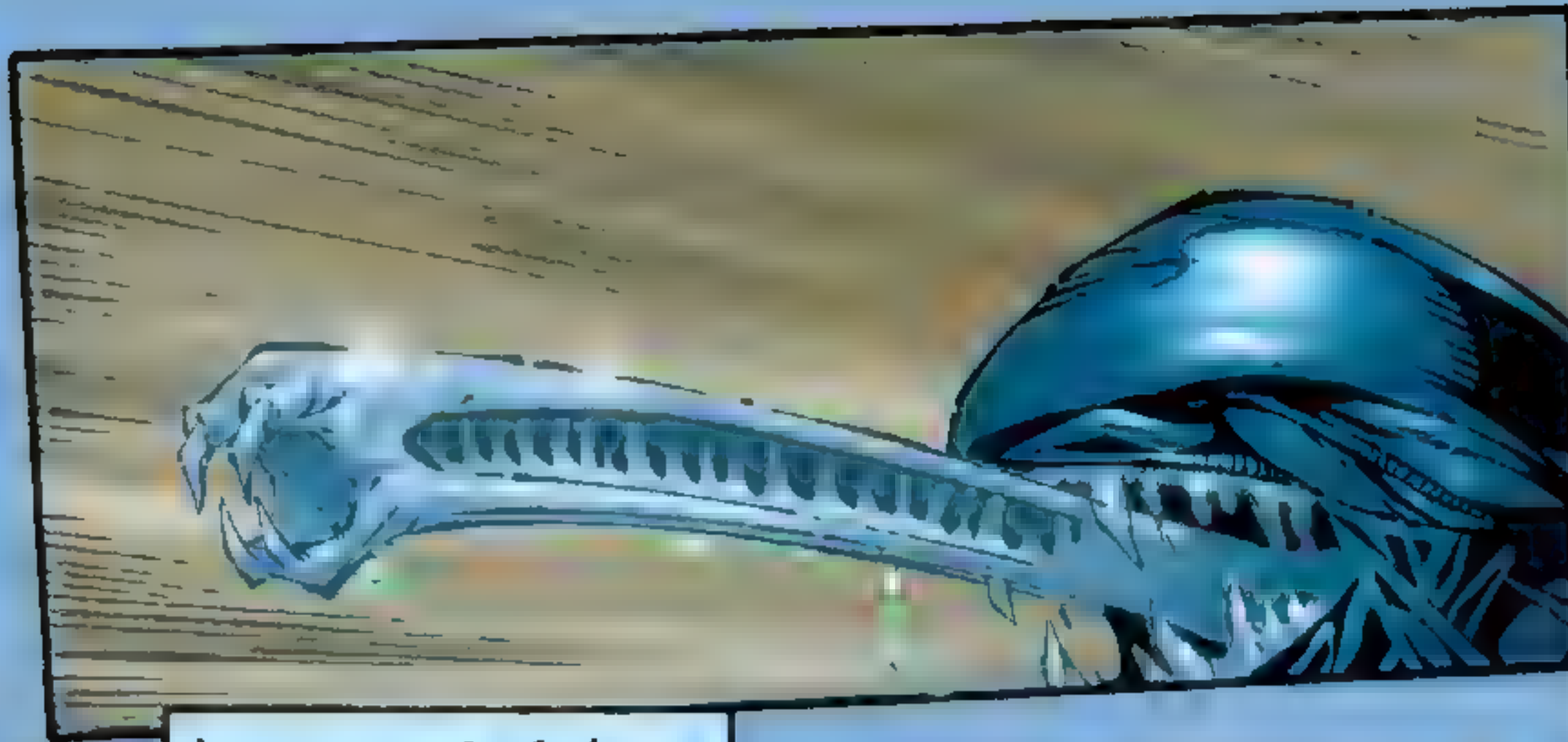
"SUDDENLY, IT ALL BECAME SO CLEAR. THIS BAIT, THIS TRAP WAS MEANT FOR ANOTHER..."



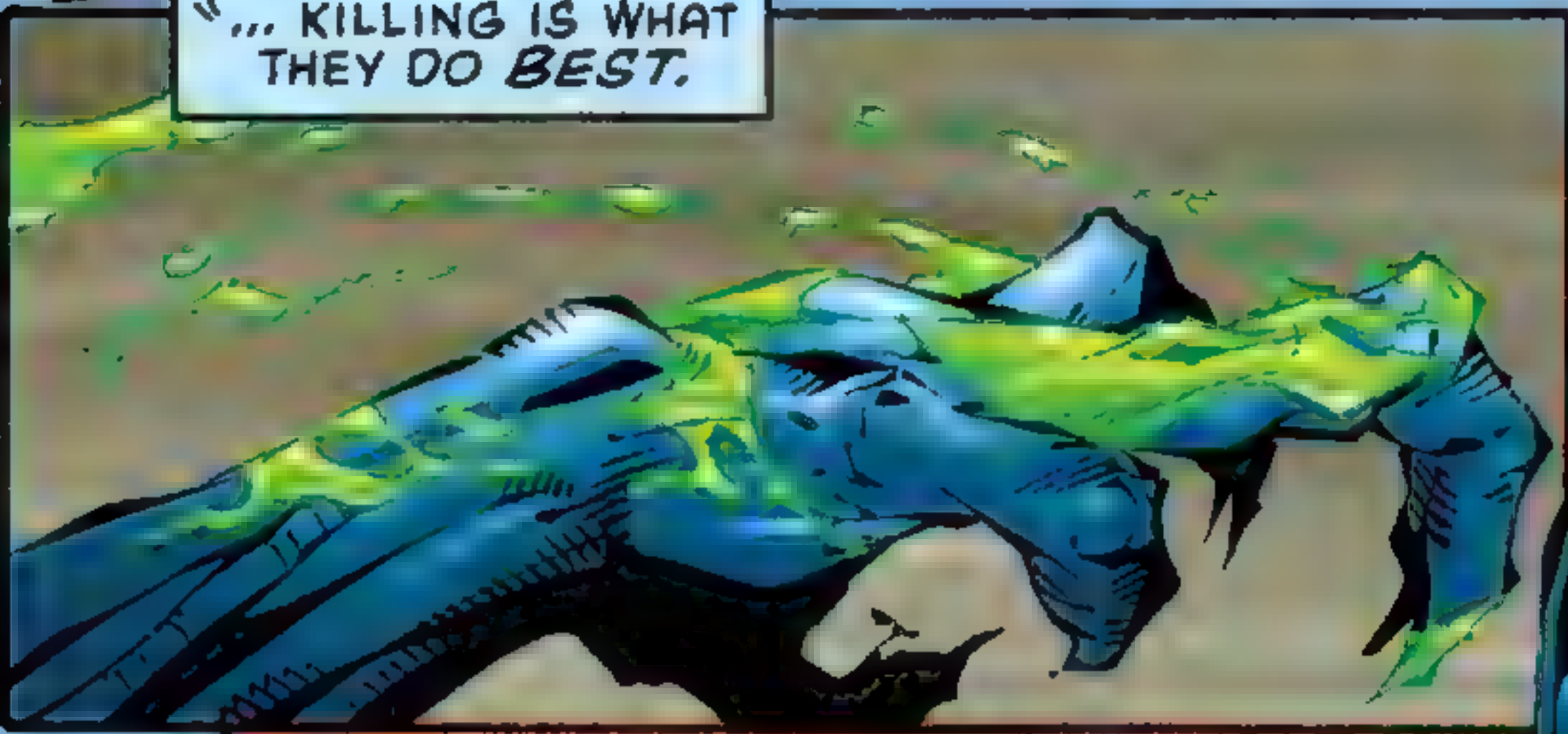
"... A MORE **FORMIDABLE** FOE! IT WAS **SHE** THEY WANTED... THE SUBJECT, **OUR** SUBJECT, THE ANDROID/ALIEN HYBRID, **ELOISE**.

"THE ALIENS... THE **XENOMORPHS** RAN TO HER HEEL LIKE A PACK OF **DOGS**. MORE BY **INSTINCT** THAN **COMMAND**.

"SHE SAID **NOTHING** TO THEM. SHE DIDN'T **HAVE** TO..."



"I'D READ ALL THE DATA ON HER DEVELOPMENT AT THE ADULLAM FACILITY. HOW SHE WAS A VAT-GROWN PROTOTYPE FROM ALIEN QUEEN DNA AND ANDROID BIOTECH, DESTINED TO BE THE LATEST IN OUR PRODUCT LINE.



"... KILLING IS WHAT THEY DO *BEST*.



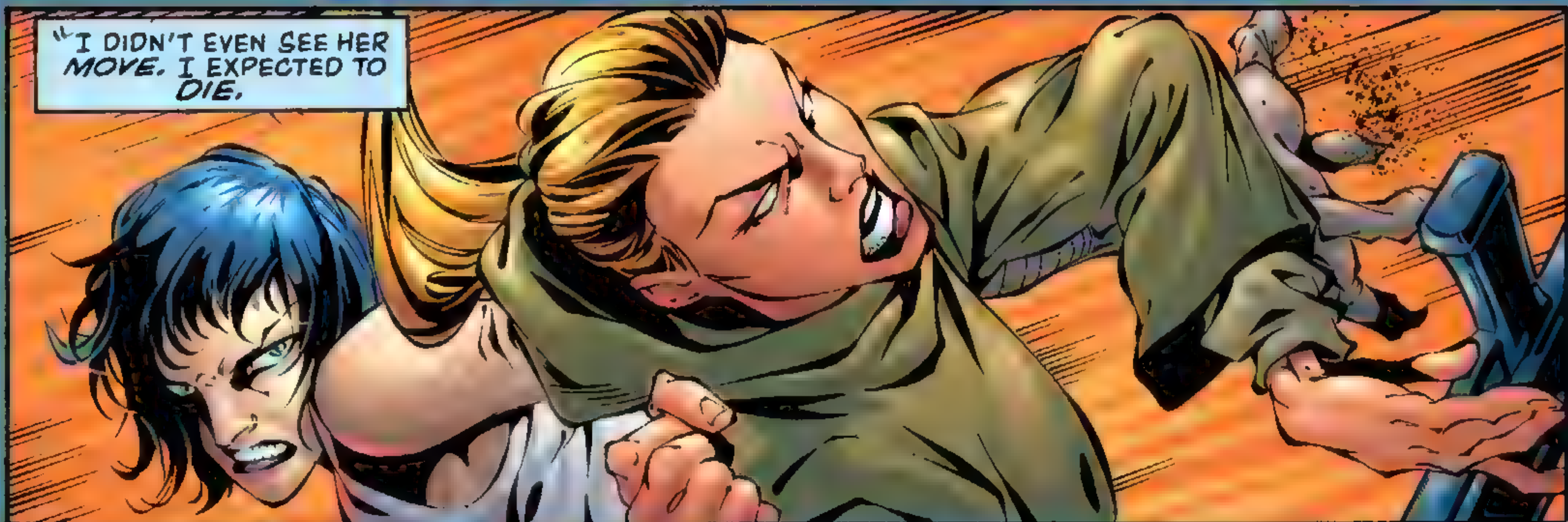
" EXCEPT SHE *WASN'T* PRODUCT, SHE WAS A *NEW* LIFE-FORM, SHE ESCAPED, TAKING A SWARM OF XENOMORPHS AND OTHER TEST SUBJECTS WITH HER.

" ALIEN-INFECTED LEPERS, THEIR CONDITION *RETARDING* FETAL-HATCHING, CREATING A *UNIQUE* SYMBIOSIS WITH THE EMBRYO.

" HER PEOPLE, HER CHILDREN.

" I WENT FOR A *DISABLING* SHOT, LEAVING HER *PRIMARY* PROCESSOR INTACT.

"I DIDN'T EVEN SEE HER
MOVE. I EXPECTED TO
DIE."



"INSTEAD,
SHE SPOKE
TO ME IN A
SOFT, VERY
HUMAN,
VOICE."



SHE
WANTED ME
TO GIVE
YOU A
MESSAGE.



"SHE WANTS US TO LEAVE HER
AND HER PEOPLE *ALONE*. WE
HAVE *PURSUED* THEM
MERCILESSLY FROM SYSTEM
TO SYSTEM, WHICH IS HOW THEY
CROSSED PATHS WITH THESE
PREDATORS WHO ARE NOW
HUNTING HER FOR THEIR OWN
REASONS."

"SHE IS *SICK* OF
RUNNING. SHE WARNS
THAT IF *ANOTHER*
UNIT IS SENT AFTER
HER, SHE'LL CONSIDER
IT AN ACT OF *WAR*.
A WAR WE'LL *NEVER*
WIN."

"AND, SIR,
I *BELIEVE* HER."

END



LEFTY'S REVENGE



script

BRIAN McDONALD

pencils

POP MHAN

inks

NORMAN LEE

colors

GUY MAJOR

lettering

CLEM ROBINS

title illustration

HUGHES LABIANO with **DAVE STEWART**



THEY CALL IT *THE OUTPOST*. IT'S WHERE PEOPLE LIKE *ME* SELL THEIR *ILL-GOTTEN* GOODS--TECHNOLOGY, MOSTLY--AWAY FROM THE *EVER-PRESENT EYES* OF THE COMPANY.

NEAREST I CAN FIGURE, SOME *GENIUS* GOT A BRIGHT IDEA TO DEAL "*BUGS*" ON THE *BLACK MARKET*.

I HAVE A *SNEAKING* SUSPICION IT DIDN'T GO AS PLANNED. MY FIRST *CLUE*? *EVERYONE* ON THE *OUTPOST* IS DEAD.

SOME QUICK AND CAREFUL SCAVENGING TURNS UP *AMMO* AND *PARTS* FOR MY *SHIP*.

I DON'T PLAN ON STAYING. NOT WITH *LEFTY* BEHIND ME. I HAVEN'T SHAKEN HIM YET, AND I DON'T GUESS THIS TO BE ANY DIFFERENT. FROM *PLANET* TO *PLANETOID*, HE'S ON MY *TAIL*.

OLD BUSINESS. LONG STORY, SHORT-- *SOME* PEOPLE ARE JUST *SORRY LOSERS*.

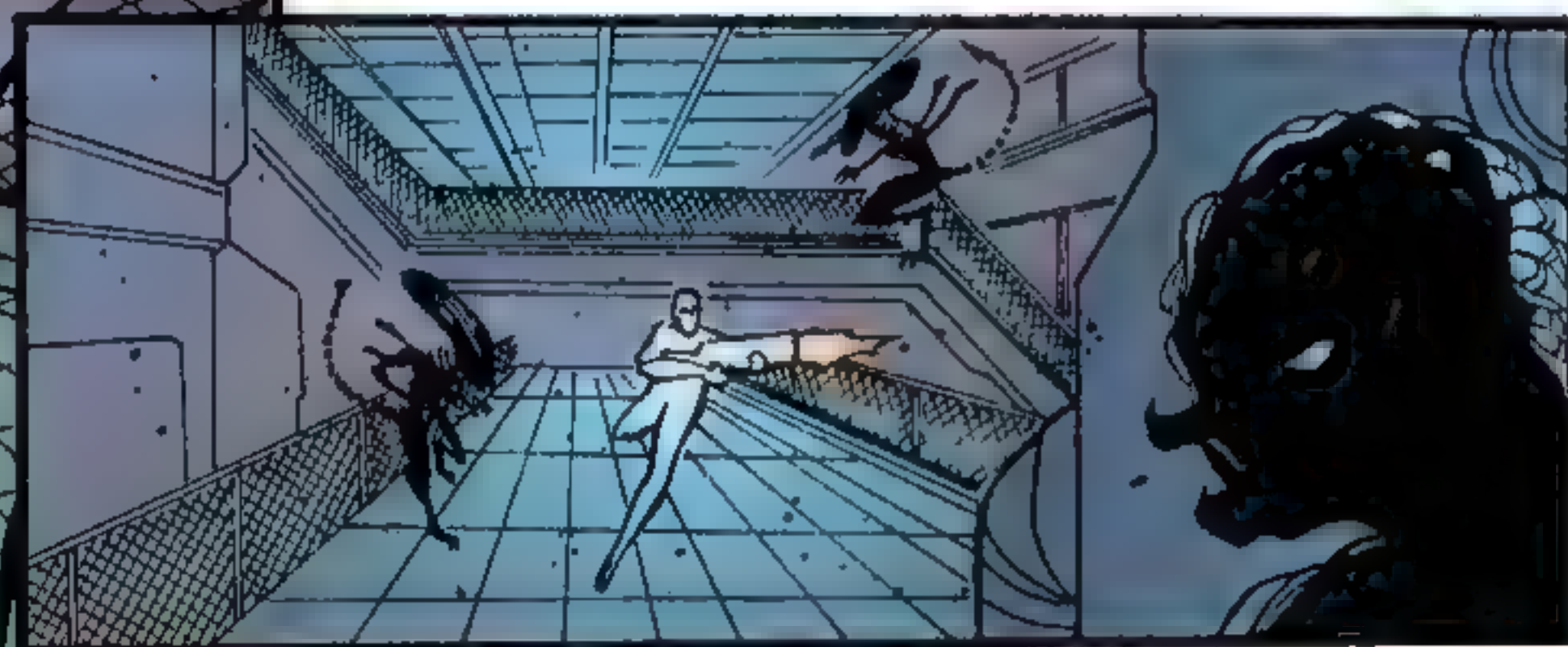
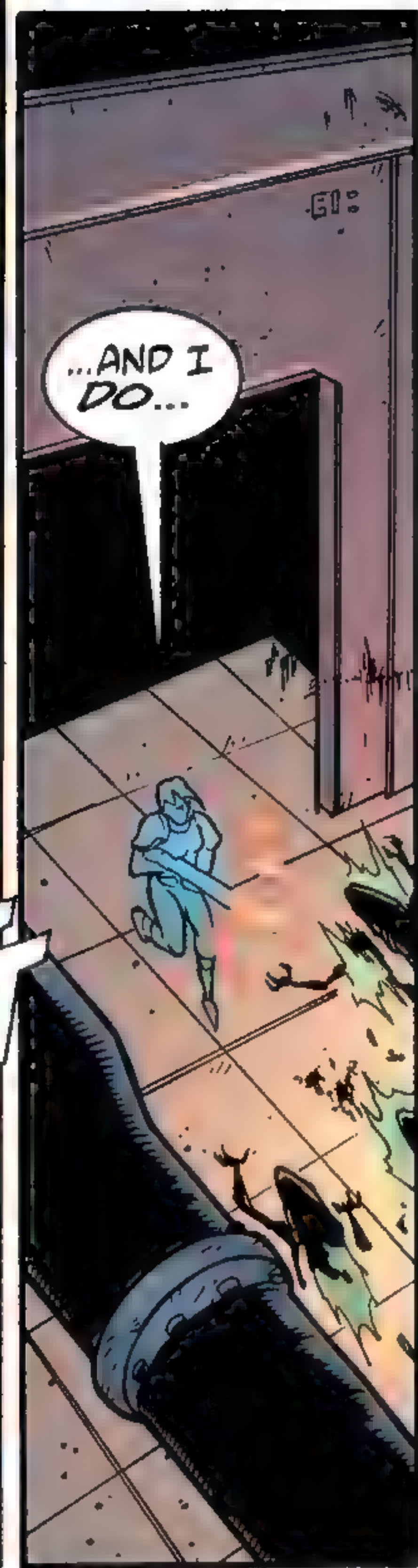
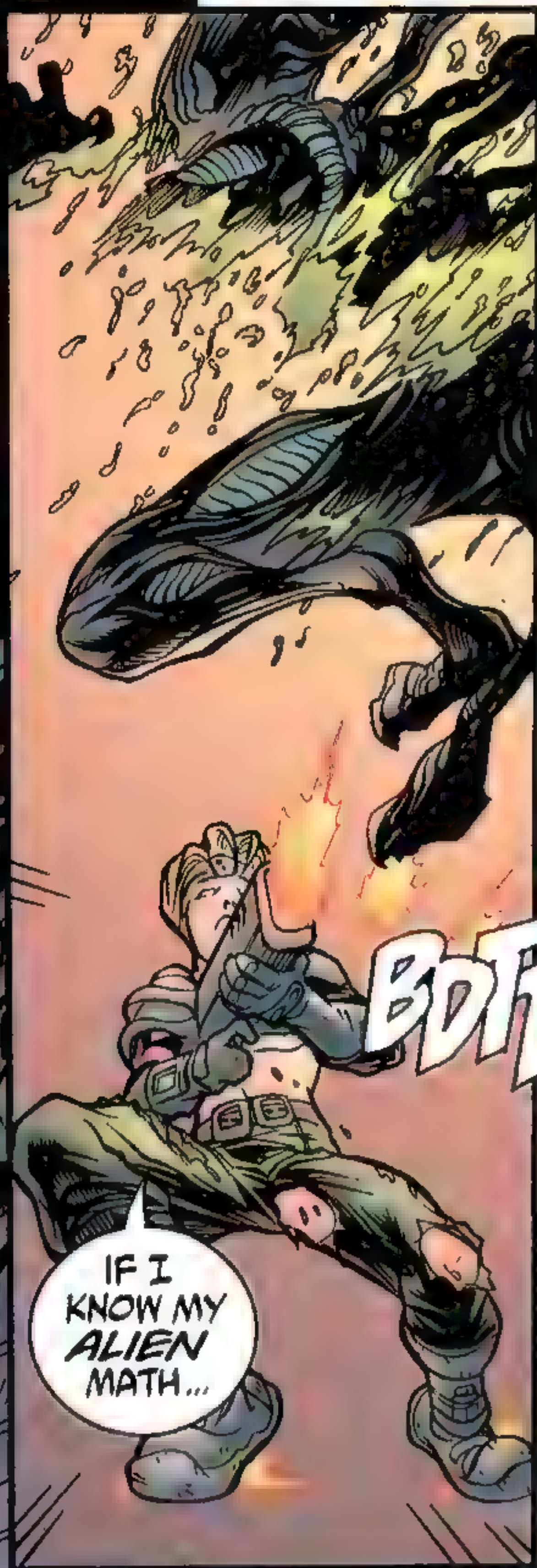
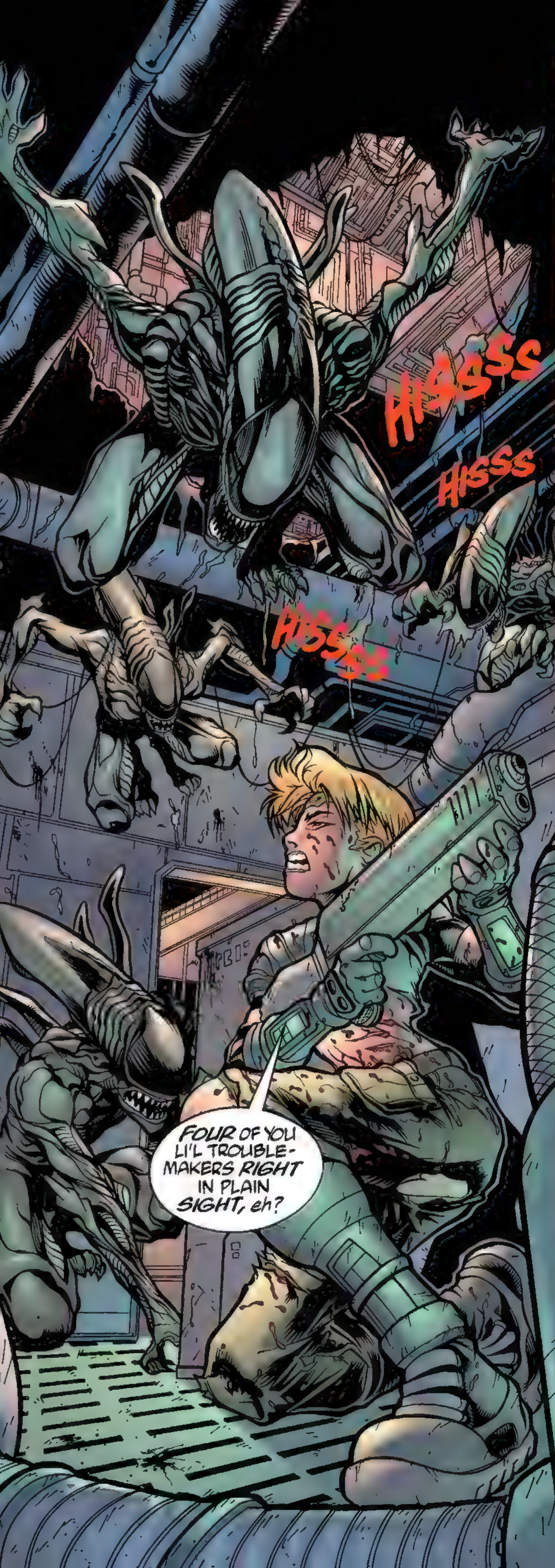
SO FAR SO GOOD--NOT A SINGLE *BUG*.

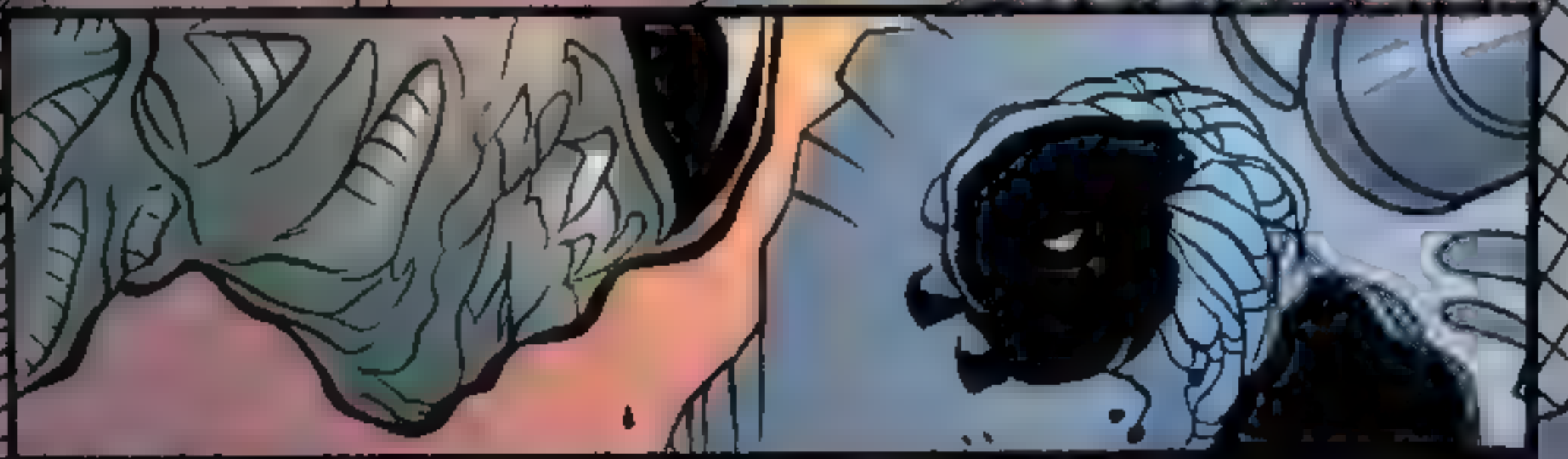
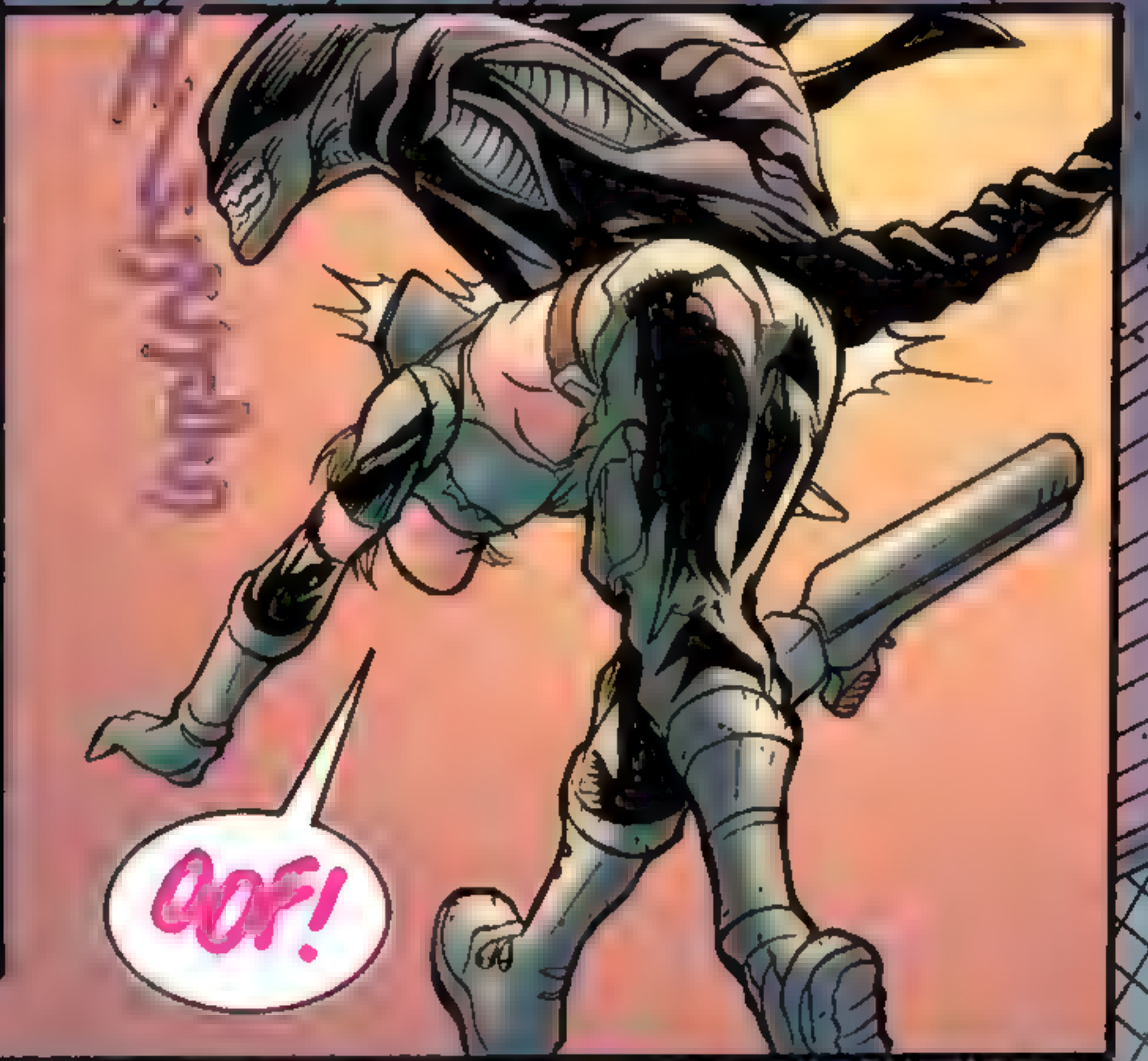
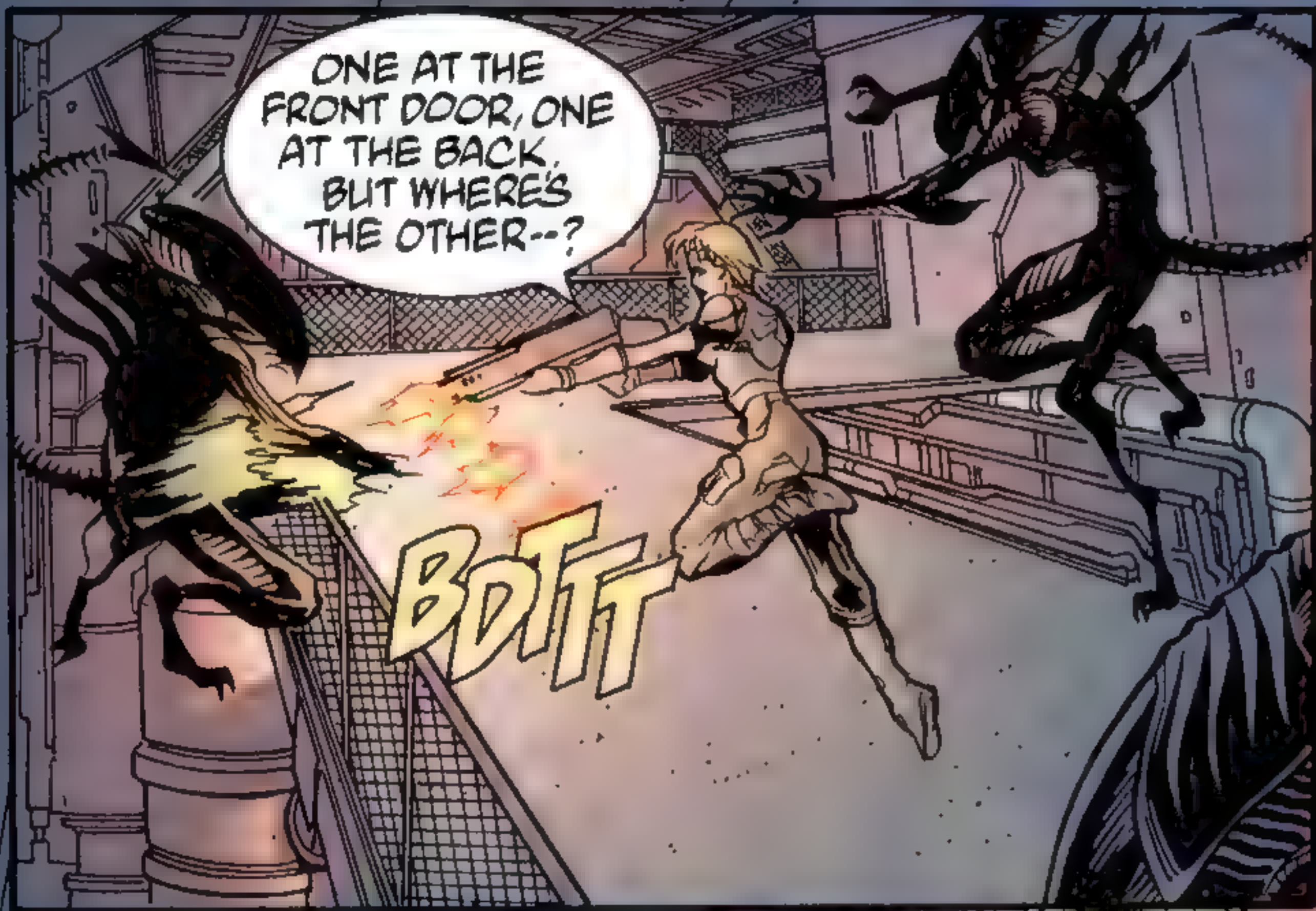
Lefty's Revenge

IT'S A *GOOD* THING I *KNOW* BETTER.

MEEP
MEEP
MEEP

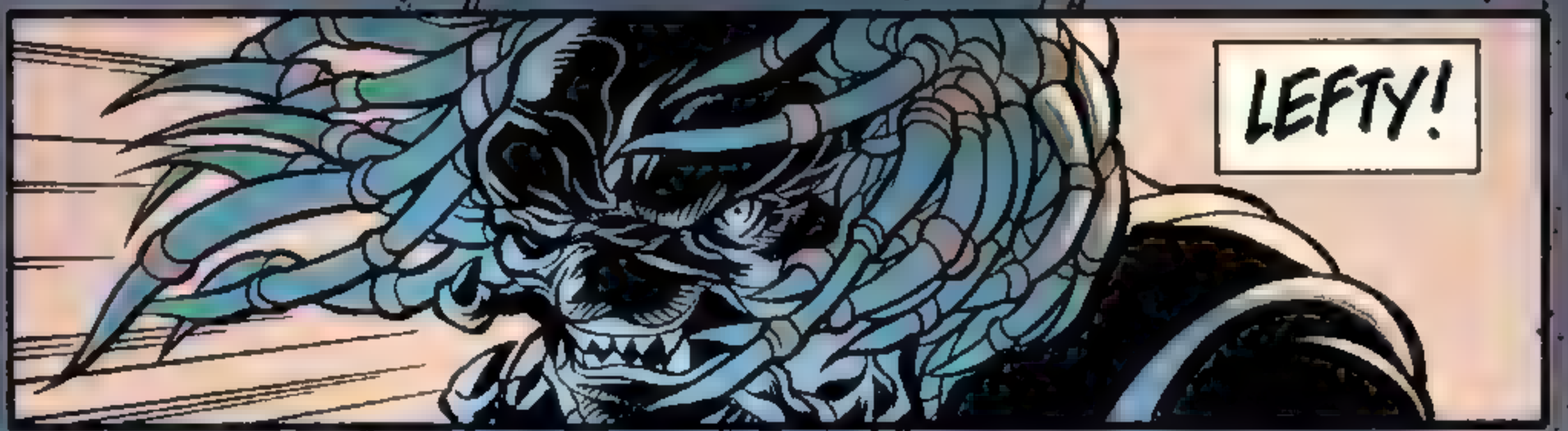
MEEP
MEEP
MEEP
MEEP
MEEP



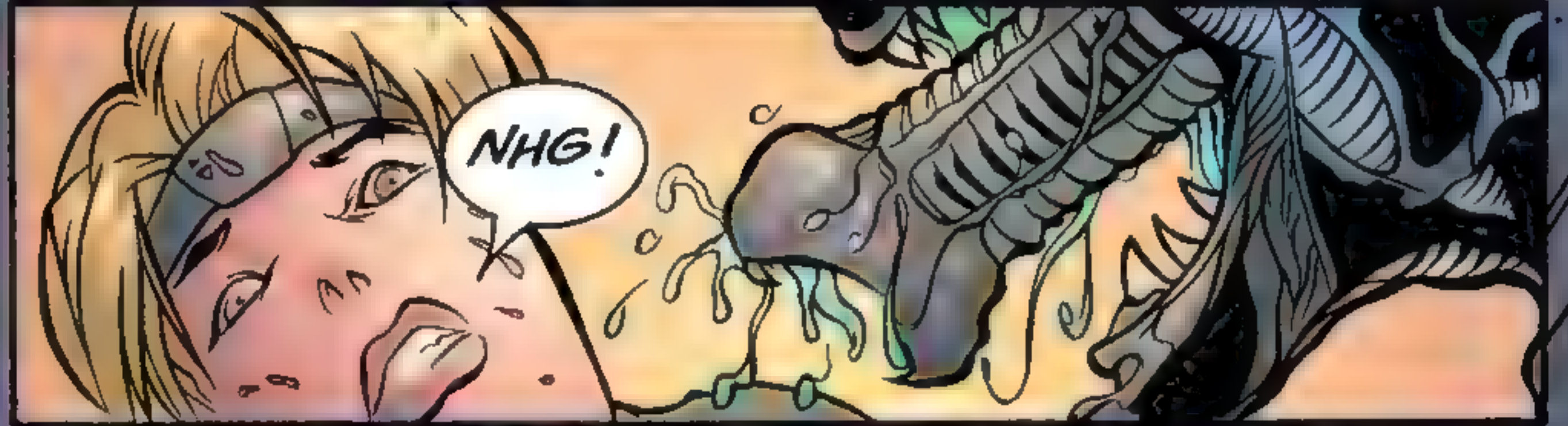


CARELESS,
BREA. THAT'S
WHATCHA GET.

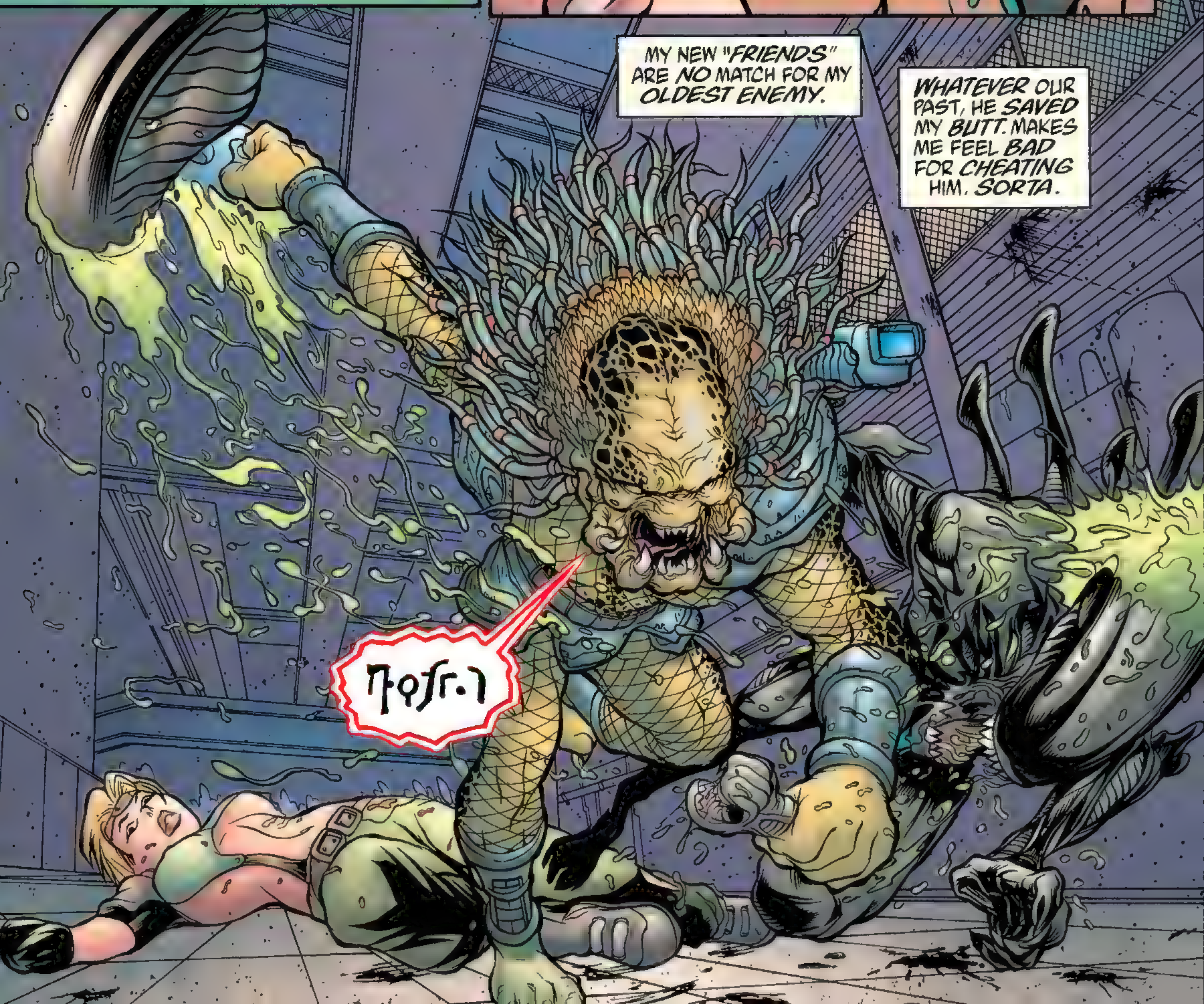
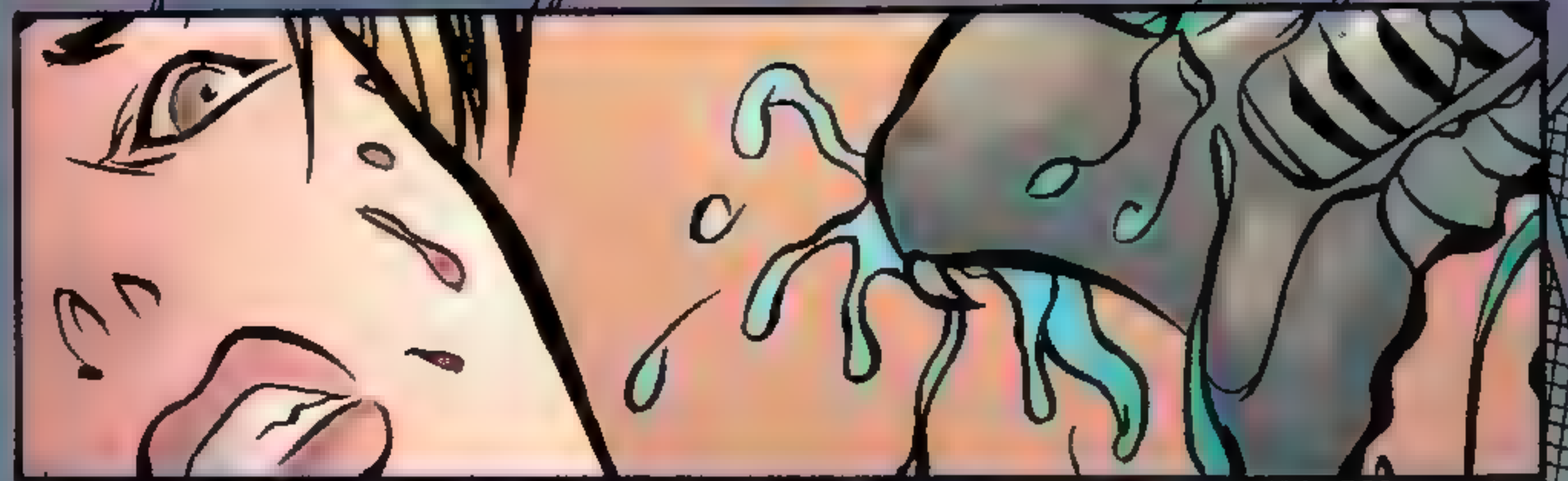




LEFTY!



NHG!



MY NEW "FRIENDS"
ARE NO MATCH FOR MY
OLDEST ENEMY.

WHATEVER OUR
PAST, HE SAVED
MY BUTT. MAKES
ME FEEL BAD
FOR CHEATING
HIM, SORTA.

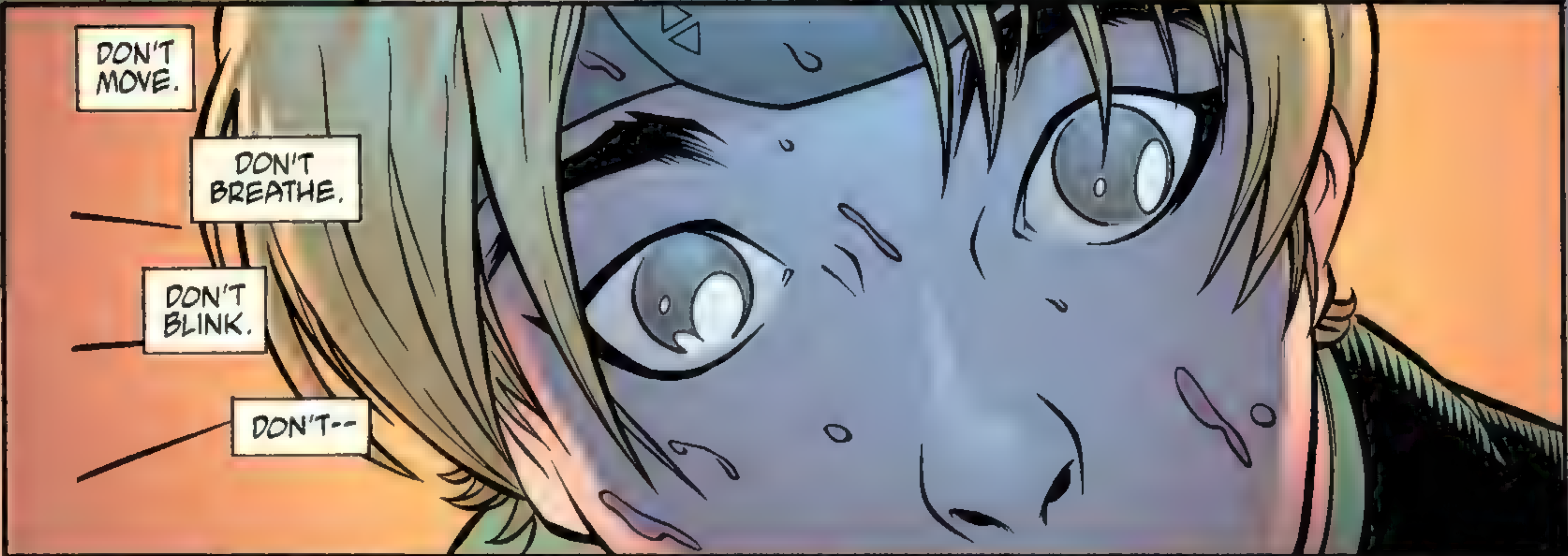
POW!



YOU'RE NOT
STILL TICKED-OFF
ABOUT THAT **EYE** THING,
ARE YOU?

U7757.7

FINE.
BE THAT
WAY.

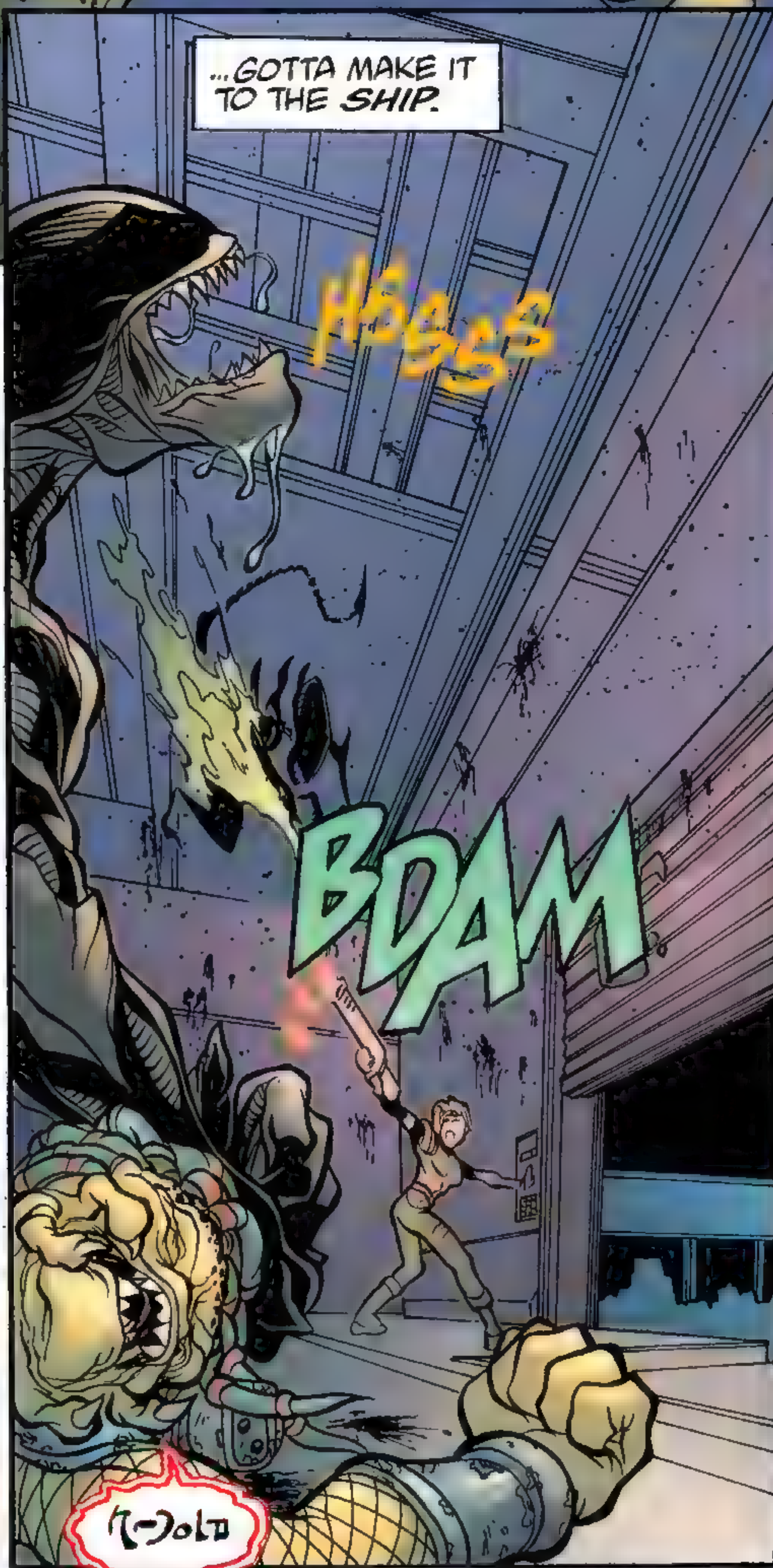


DON'T
MOVE.

DON'T
BREATHE.

DON'T
BLINK.

DON'T--

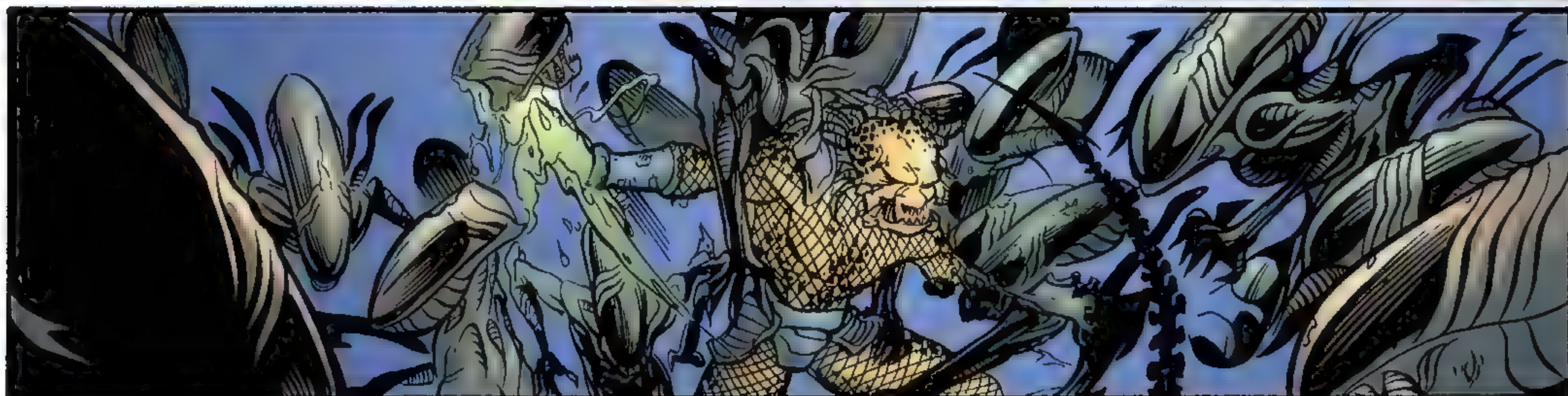




WHAT'S THIS?

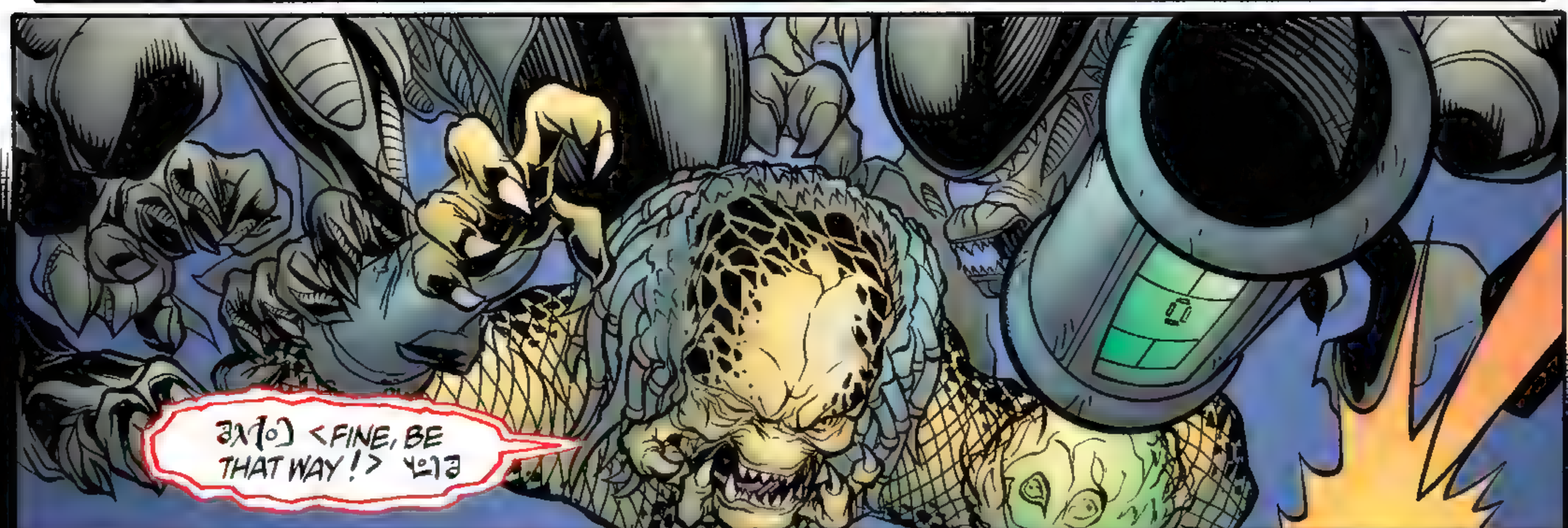
CAN'T
LEAVE
LEFTY.

NICE TIME TO DEVELOP
A CONSCIENCE. IF I
DIE, I'M GONNA BE
REALLY PISSED.



THE WRIST-NUKE.
LEFTY'S WRIST-
NUKE. LIKE I SAID,
LOONG STORY.

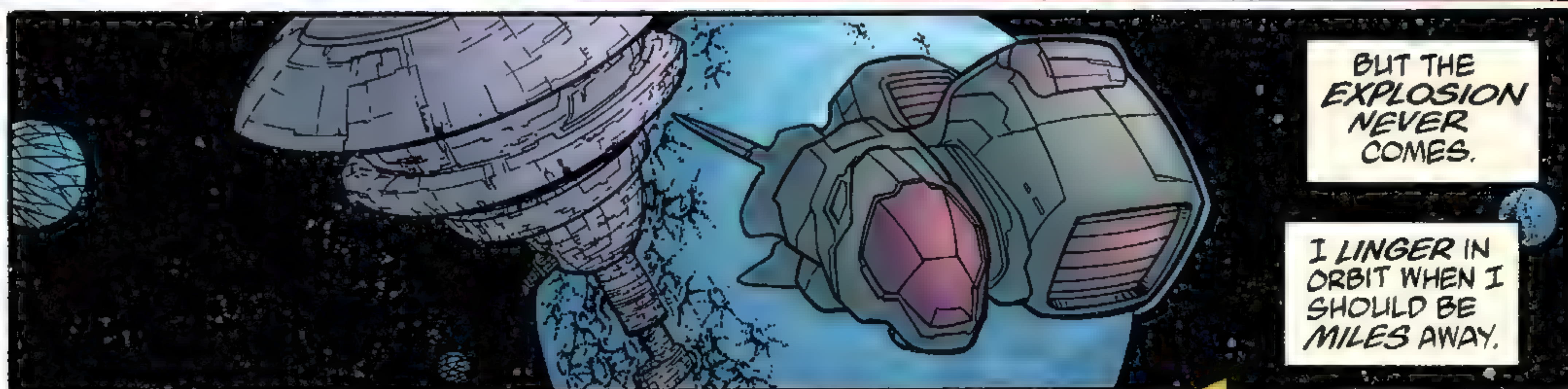
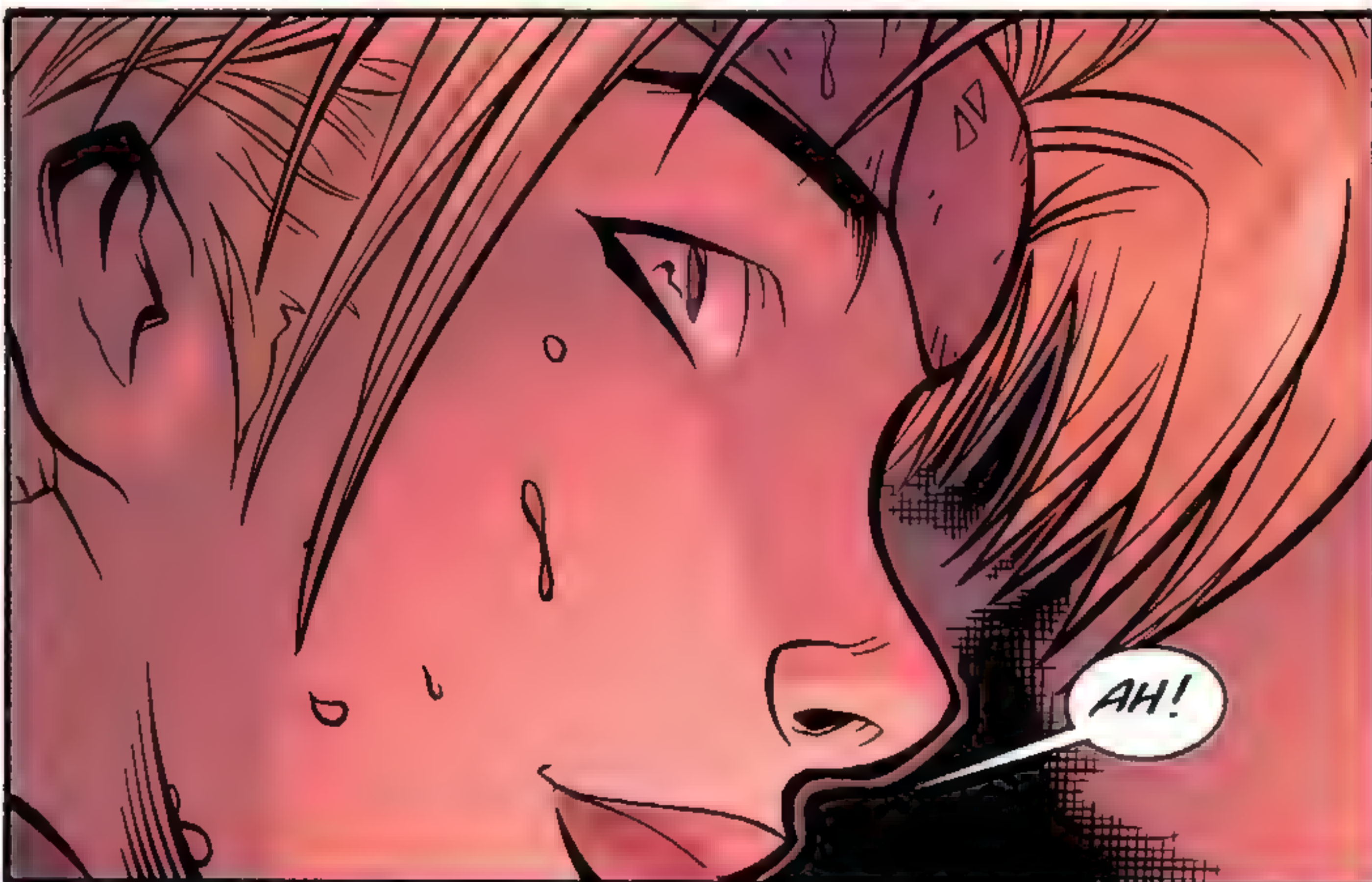
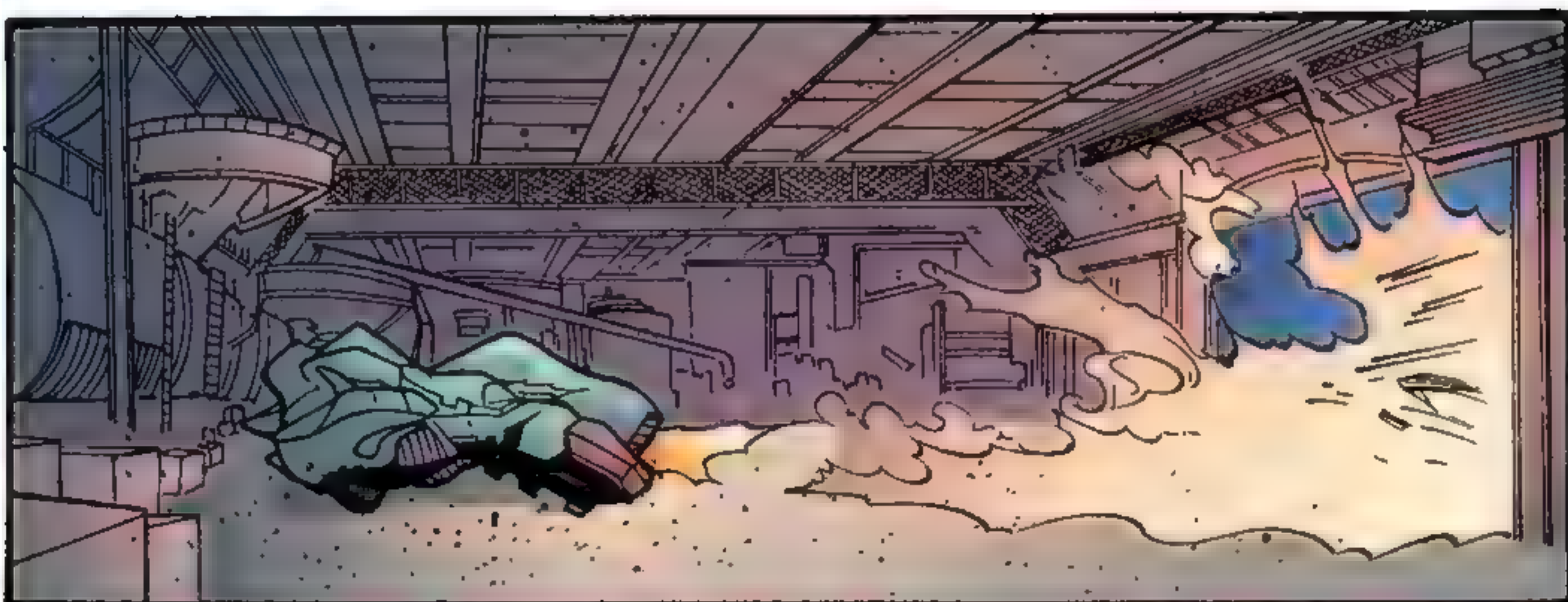
USE IT
IN GOOD
HEALTH.



3x10 < FINE, BE
THAT WAY! > 423

TIME TO GO.

I FIGURE *SECONDS* BEFORE THAT *NUKE* GOES OFF AND TURNS THE OUTPOST INTO *STARDUST*.



BUT THE *EXPLOSION* NEVER COMES.

I *LINGER* IN ORBIT WHEN I SHOULD BE *MILES AWAY*.

DID THE ALIENS *SHRED* LEFTY BEFORE HE COULD GO MAJOR? EVEN THAT *OL' SUCKER* COULD HOLD THOSE BUGS OFF LONG ENOUGH TO *ACTIVATE* THE *DETONATOR*.

FF-FOOSH

OR DOES HIS RACE'S *SCREWBALL HONOR CODE* GO DEEPER THAN I KNOW? MAYBE WITHOUT *VEN-GEANCE*, HE CAN'T DIE *HONORABLY*.

AND THAT MEANS I'VE LEFT HIM TO A *GRISLY END*.

YUCK.

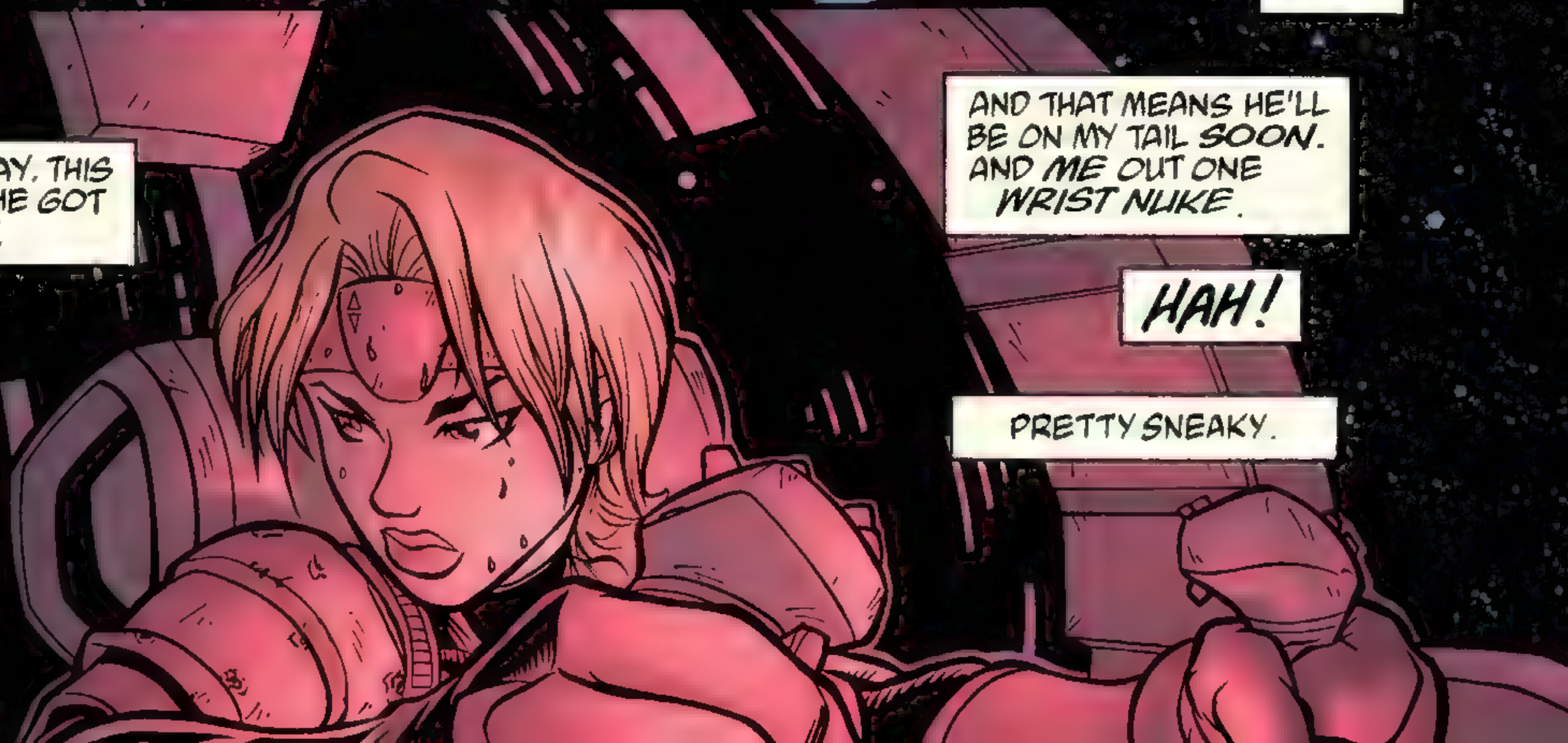
NO.

HE GOT AWAY. THIS IS *LEFTY*. HE GOT AWAY.

AND THAT MEANS HE'LL BE ON MY TAIL *SOON*. AND ME OUT ONE *WRIST NUKE*.

HAH!

PRETTY *SNEAKY*.



CHAINED TO LIFE AND DEATH



script
MARK SCHULTZ

art
TOM BIONDOLILLO

colors
LEE LOUGHRIDGE

lettering
CLEM ROBINS

title illustration
JOHN BOLTON



CHAINED to LIFE and DEATH

THE HUNTER ON THE GROUND SHIFTED PAINFULLY AS CONSCIOUSNESS RETURNED IN A FLOOD.

MEMORY, TOTAL ALERTNESS, AND A CANNY APPRAISAL OF HIS SITUATION ALL RETURNED IN A SPLIT-SECOND FLASH OF INSIGHT--DEADLY, EFFICIENT SURVIVAL INSTINCTS MESHING IN PERFECT SYNC WITH THE COLD, CALM INTELLIGENCE THAT MARKS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL PREDATOR OF PREDATORS.

HE HAD NOT LIVED THIS LONG FOR BEING ANY LESS THAN THE VERY BEST.

BUT MORE PAINFUL THAN THE TERRIBLE ACID BURNS THAT CORRODED HIS AGONIZED FLESH WAS THE GRIM TRUTH THEY REVEALED-- NOTHING STAYS THE BEST FOREVER.

A QUICK SYSTEMS DIAGNOSTIC TOLD HIM THAT HE WAS IN NO IMMEDIATE DANGER OF DYING FROM HIS WOUNDS. LIKE ALL HIS KIND, HIS PHYSICAL SHELL WAS TOUGH BEYOND BELIEF, CAGING AN EQUALLY RESILIENT SPIRIT.

THE EXCRUCIATING PAIN SERVED AS AN EXCLAMATION POINT PUNCTUATING HIS WILL TO LIVE.



PERMANENT DISABILITY, HOWEVER ...

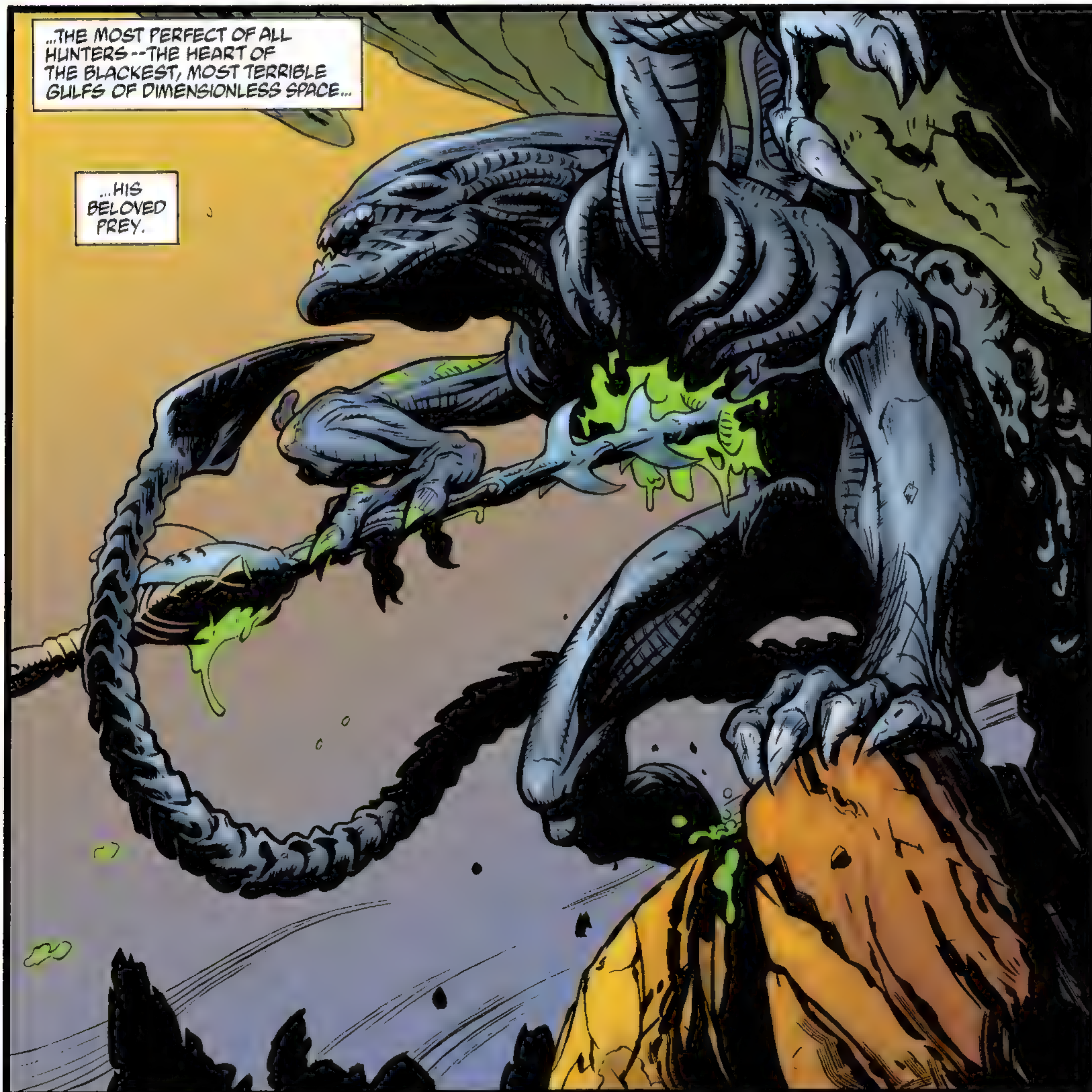
THE HUNTER FORCED HIS MIND AWAY FROM HIS DISCOMFORT AND BACK TOWARD THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS AT HAND...

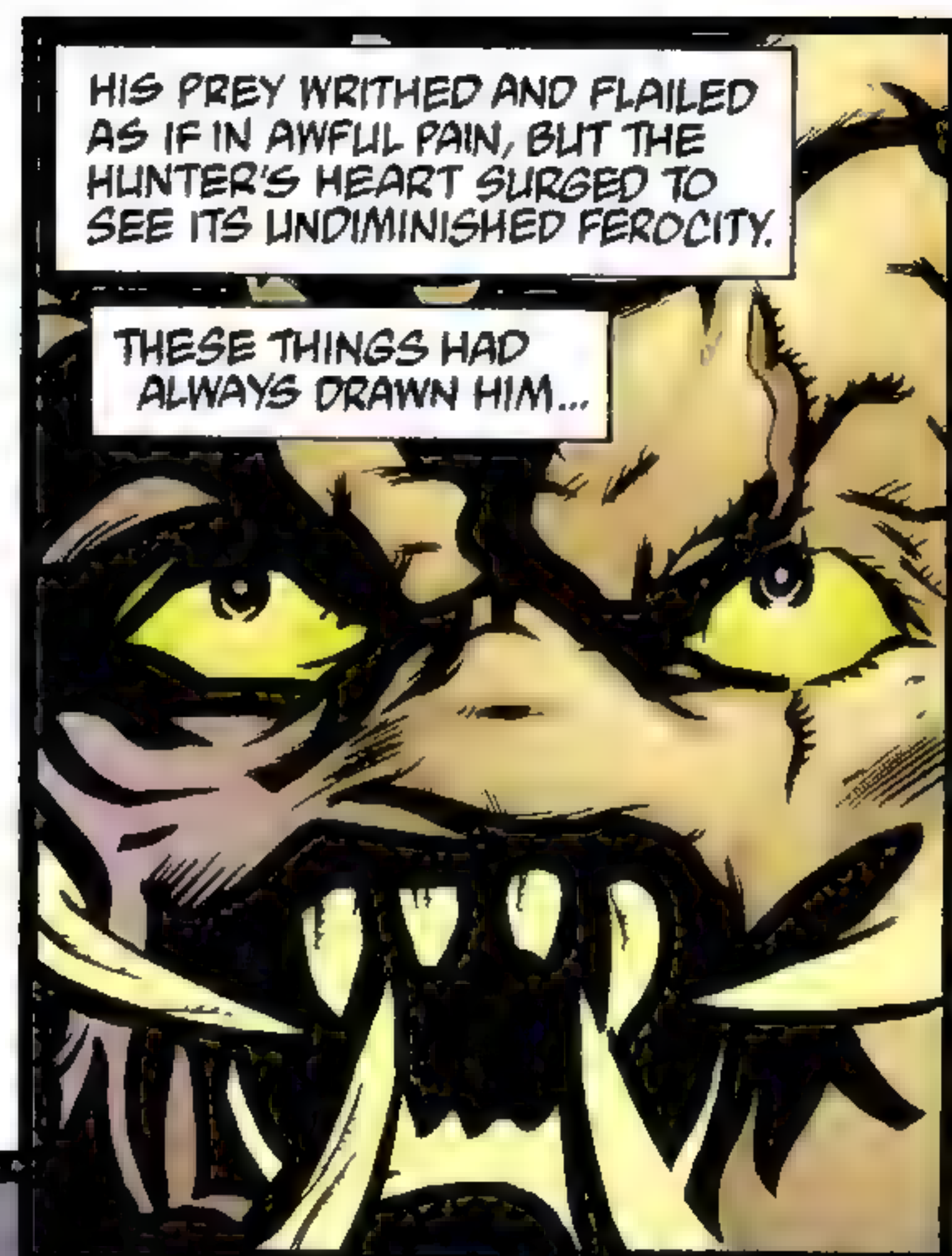
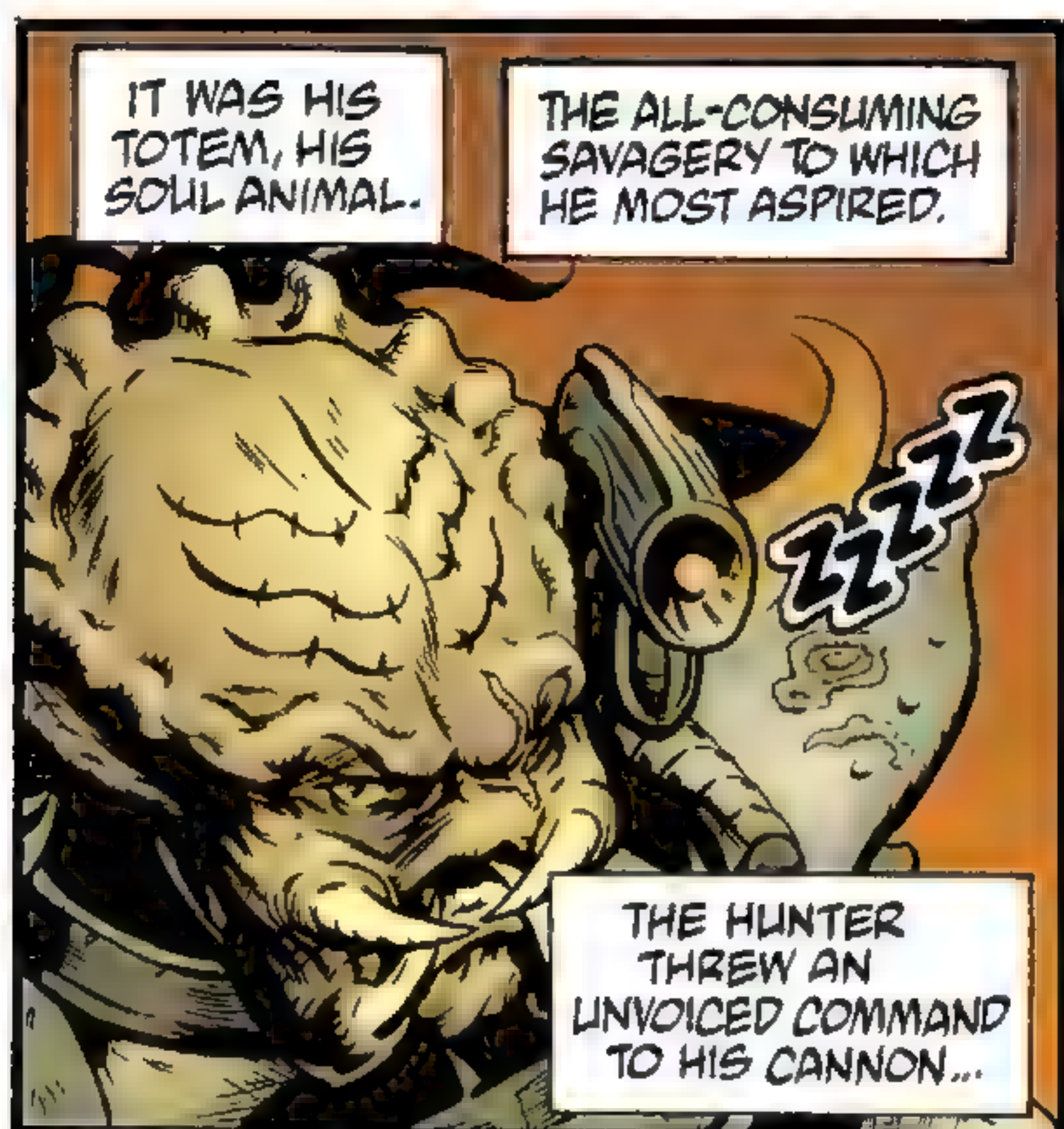
...THE TROPHY HE HAD COME SO FAR TO CLAIM...

...THE THING HE MOST ADMIRER, TO WHICH HE FELT CLOSEST...

...THE MOST PERFECT OF ALL HUNTERS--THE HEART OF THE BLACKEST, MOST TERRIBLE GULFS OF DIMENSIONLESS SPACE...

...HIS BELOVED PREY.







HE STUDIED THEM--HE TRIED TO THINK LIKE THEM.

HE KNEW THEM BETTER THAN ANY OTHER, AND SO BECAME THE MASTER...



...WITH THE LAURELS OF AN ENTIRE WORLD LAID BEFORE HIM.

BUT SUCH EXALTED STATUS DEMANDS TO BE CONSTANTLY PROVEN...



...IN A SOCIETY WHERE ALL MUST IMPROVE THEIR POSITION WITHIN THE PACK...

...OR DIE.

THE PRESSURE FROM BELOW NEVER ENDS...



...AND SO, ALTHOUGH WELL AWARE THAT HE WAS GROWING PAST HIS PRIME, HE HAD EMBARKED ON THIS ...A FINAL, GLORIOUS HUNT.



THE STALKING HAD GONE WELL ON THIS DISTANT, TOXIC PLANET.



HIS CAREFULLY CHOSEN QUARRY HAD BEEN CORNERED BEFORE EVER SENSING HIS PRESENCE.

BUT THEN...

HE HAD PREDICTED THE WHIPPING TAIL, BUT EVEN SO, HIS REACTION CAME A FRACTION OF A SECOND TOO LATE.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, HIS REFLEXES HAD FAILED HIM.

THIS KILL WOULD NOT BE CLEAN.

THE HUNTER REFOCUSED ON HIS TRANSFIXED PREY AND AGAIN CONTEMPLATED THE BOTTOMLESS RAGE, THE HELLISH DESIRE WITH WHICH IT CLUNG TO LIFE...

...AND MADE A DECISION.

IT WAS AN AMAZING THING. ALTHOUGH SUFFERING GHASTLY WOUNDS, IT STILL THRASHED AND SWELLED WITH A CONCENTRATED FURY AND A BLIND, HORRIFYING PURPOSE.



IT BEGAN ITS INEXORABLE CRAWL TOWARD THE STILL HUNTER, AND HE SUDDENLY REALIZED, IN ONE DISTURBING INSTANT, THAT HIS THEORIES, HIS NOTIONS, WERE *NOTHING*.

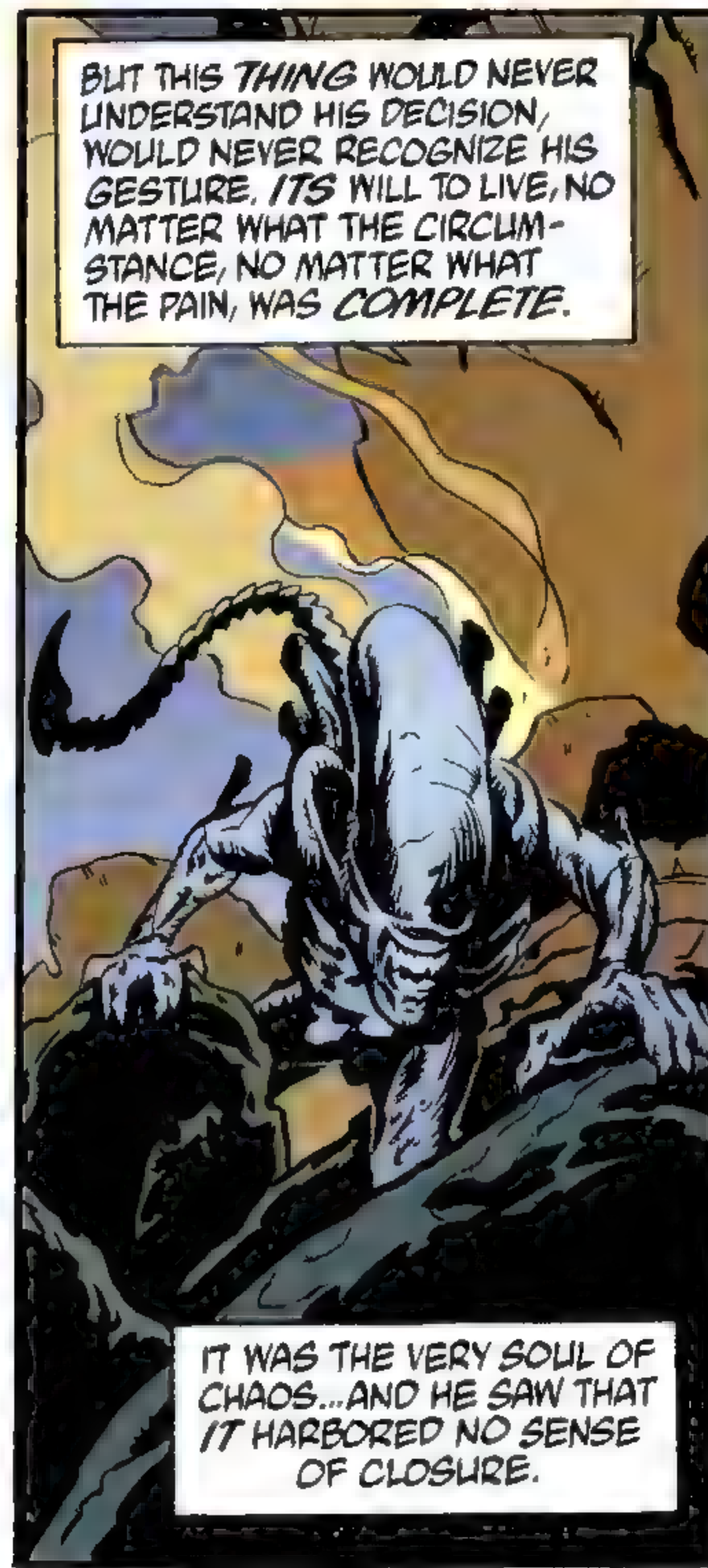
HE HAD *NOTHING* IN COMMON WITH THIS...*THING*.



HIS DAY HAD PASSED, AND RATHER THAN THE DEGRADING, INEVITABLE SLIDE DOWN HIS WARRIOR-CLASS HIERARCHY, HE HAD CHOSEN A NOBLE DEATH BENEATH THE FANGS OF HIS BELOVED PREY.



BUT THIS *THING* WOULD NEVER UNDERSTAND HIS DECISION, WOULD NEVER RECOGNIZE HIS GESTURE. *ITS* WILL TO LIVE, NO MATTER WHAT THE CIRCUMSTANCE, NO MATTER WHAT THE PAIN, WAS *COMPLETE*.



IT WAS THE VERY SOUL OF CHAOS...AND HE SAW THAT IT HARBORED NO SENSE OF CLOSURE.



IN THIS FINAL MOMENT IT MADE ALL HIS GRAND ACCOMPLISHMENTS SEEM PUNY, HIS NOBILITY, MEANINGLESS.

THIS WAS NOT THE END FOR WHICH HE'D HOPED.

XENOGENESIS



script
ANDI WATSON

pencils
MEL RUBI

inks
MARK LIPKA
NORMAN LEE

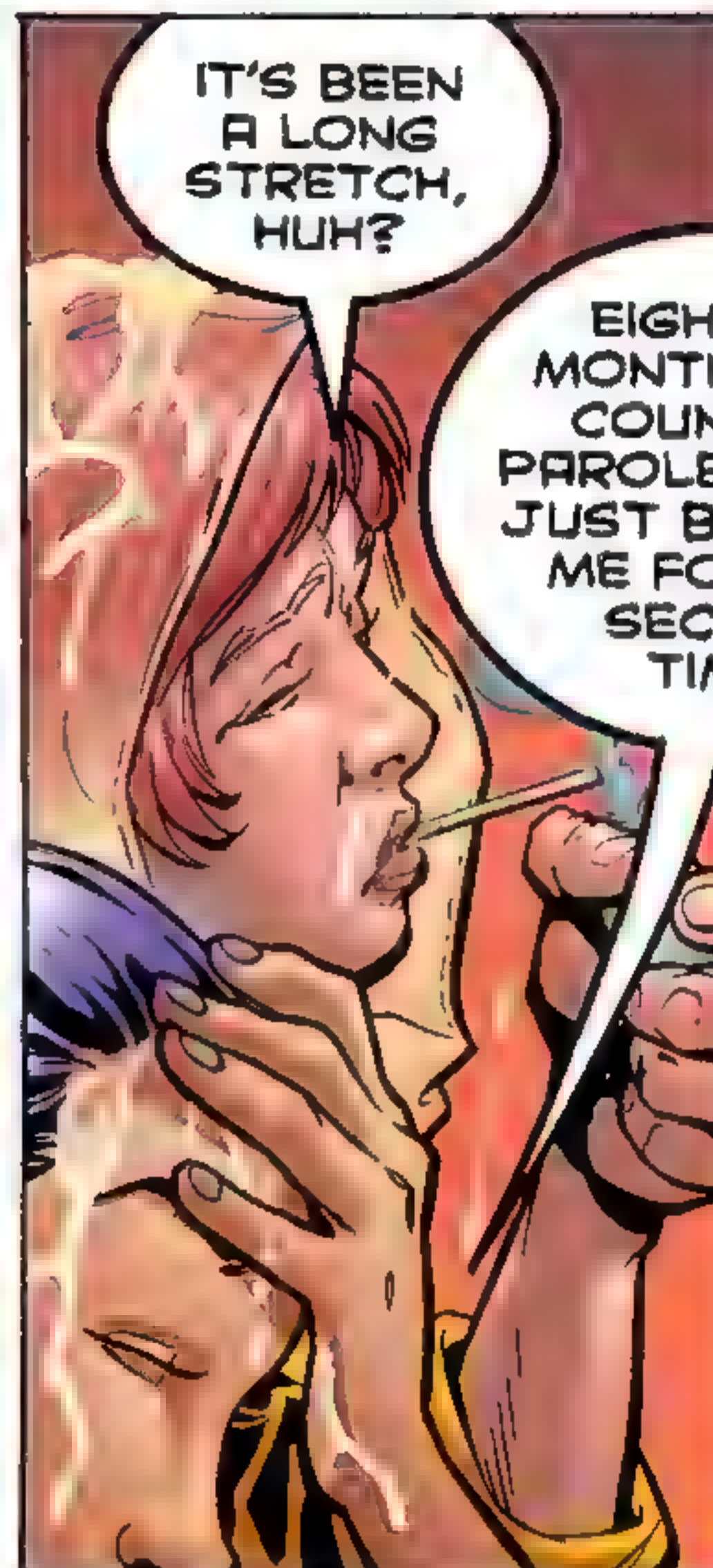
colors
DAVE STEWART

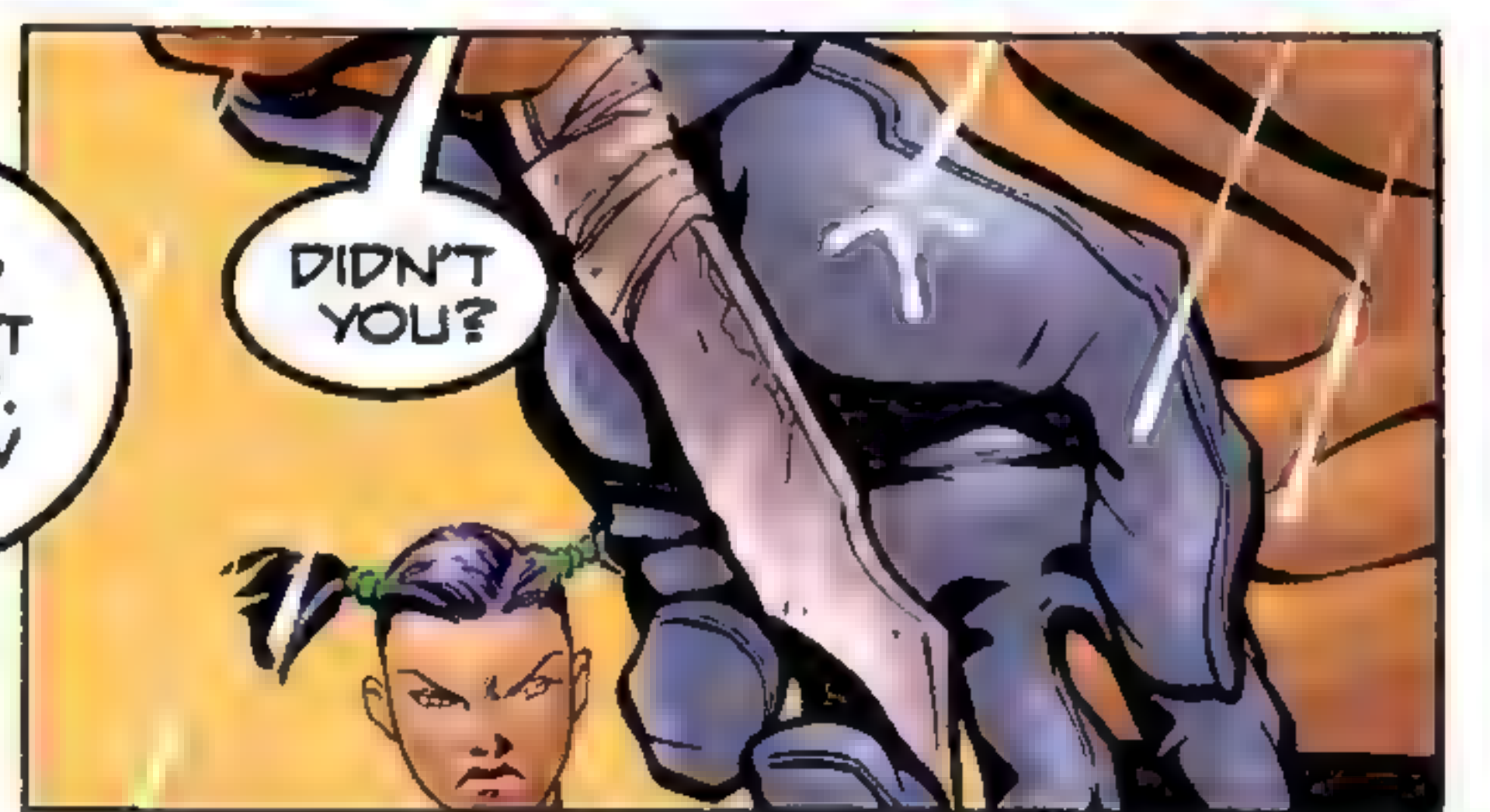
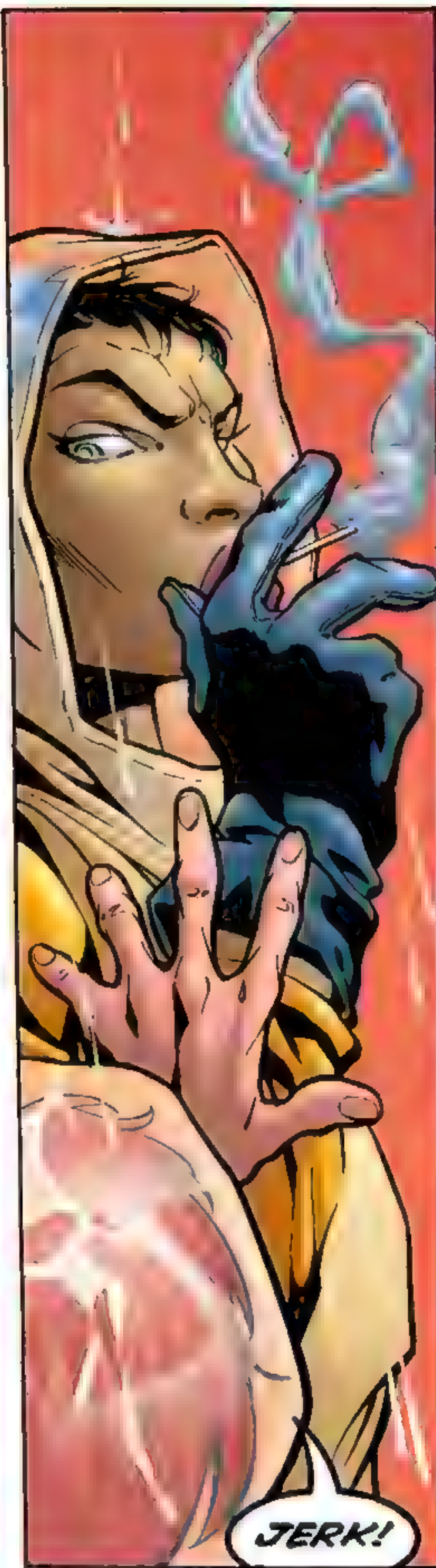
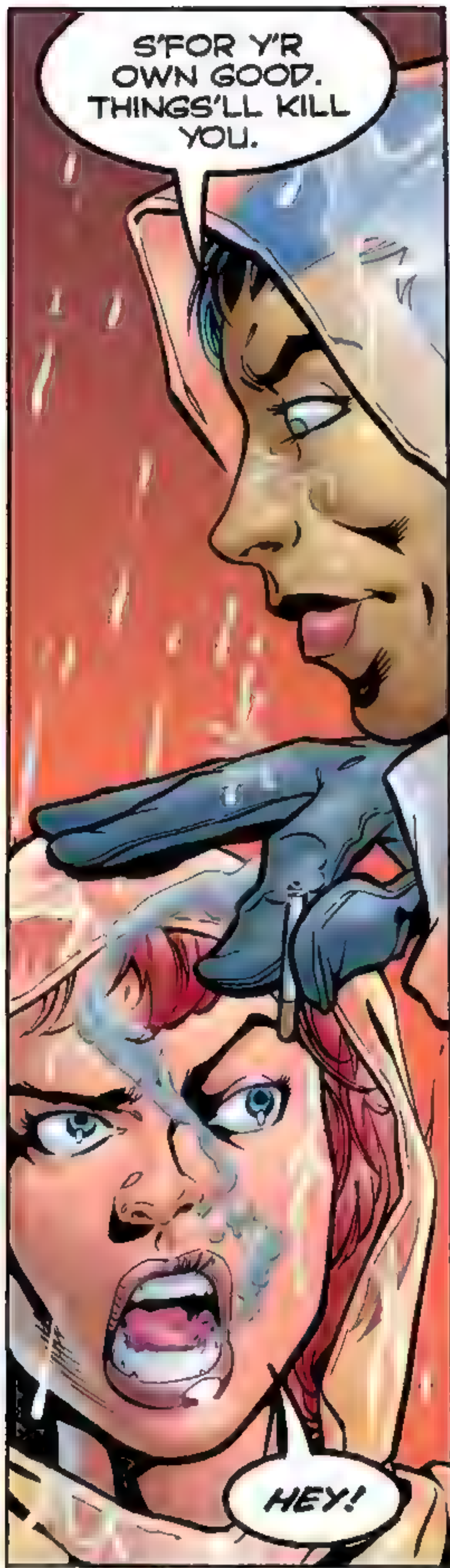
lettering
PAT BROSSEAU

title illustration
HUGHES LABIANO with **DAVE STEWART**

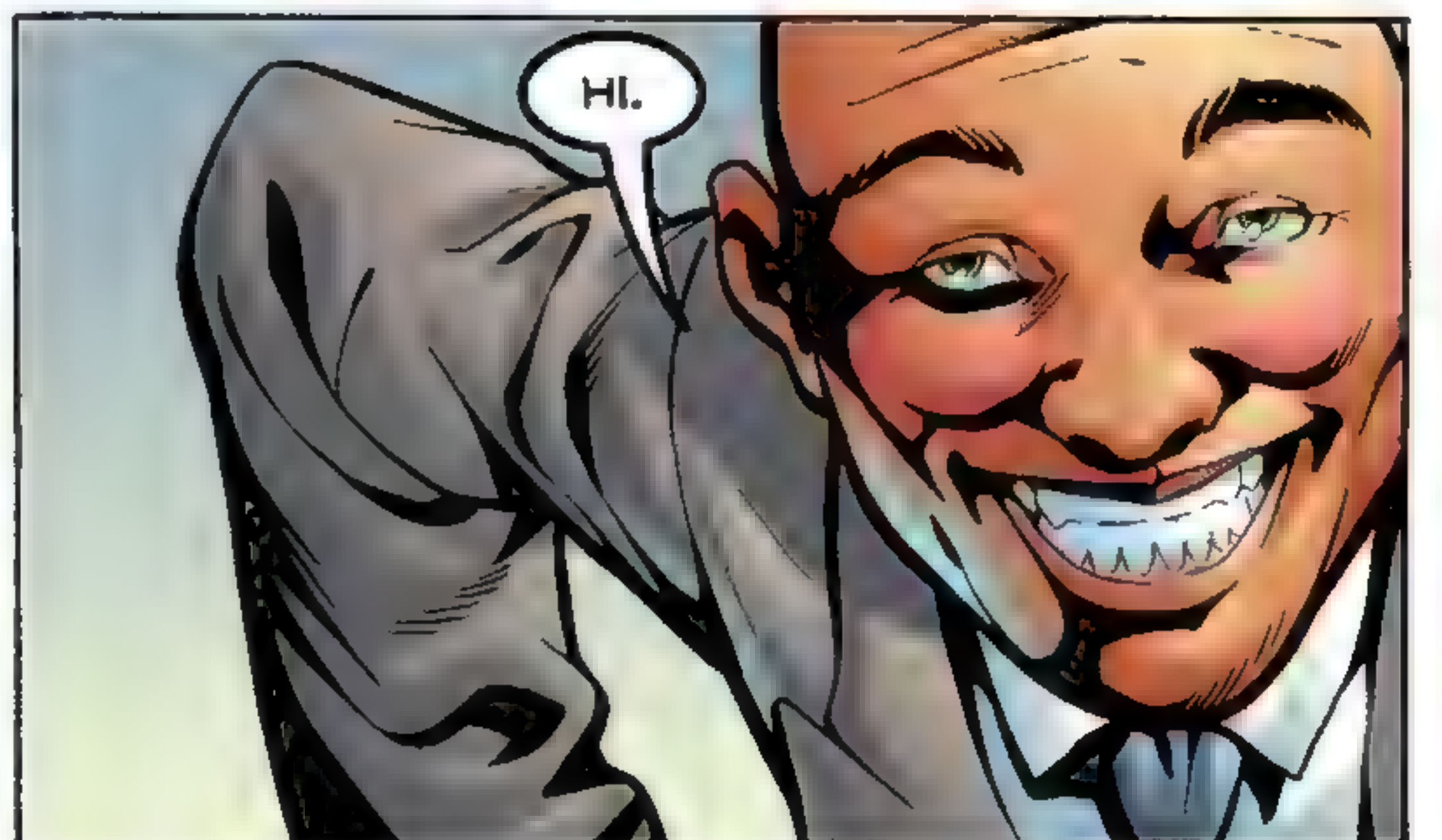
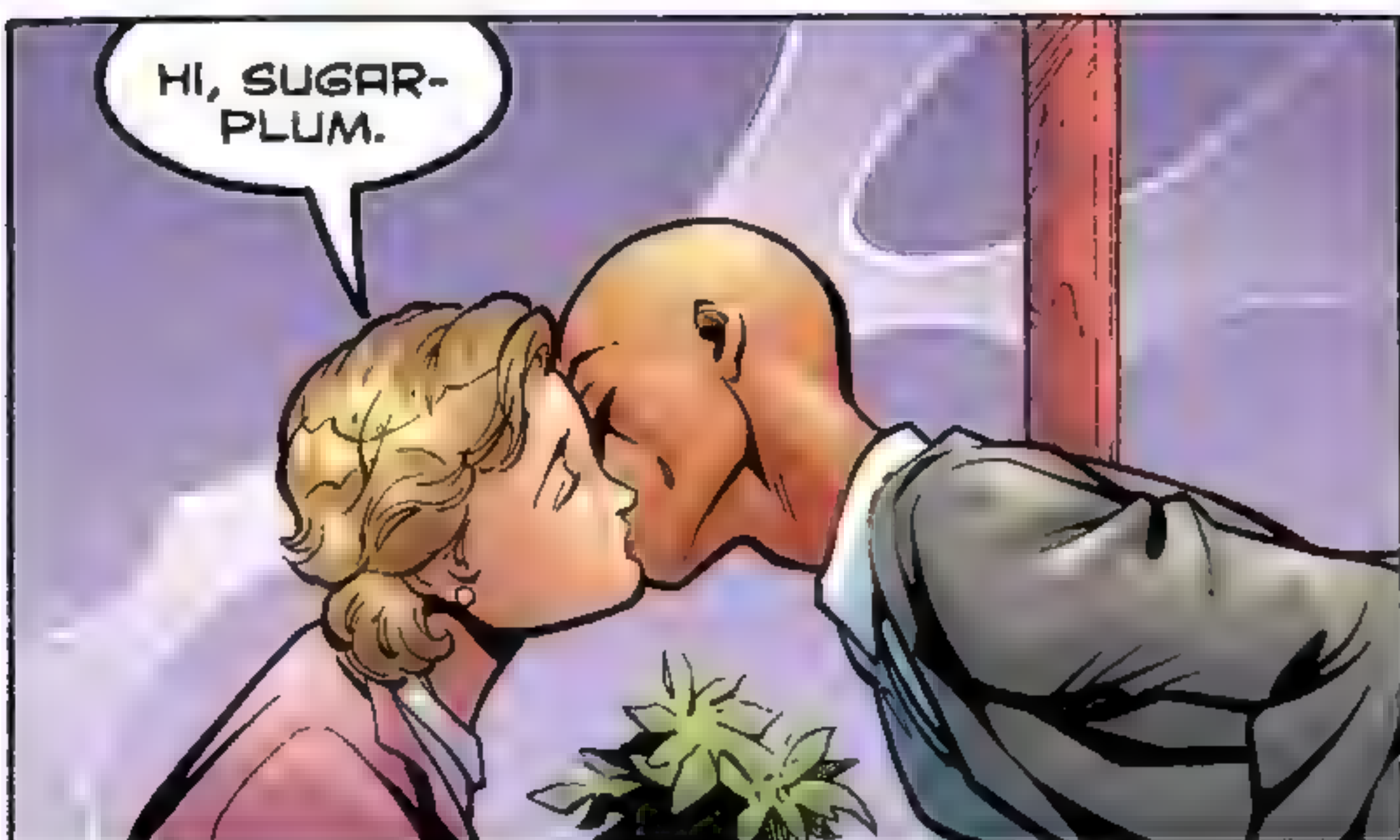
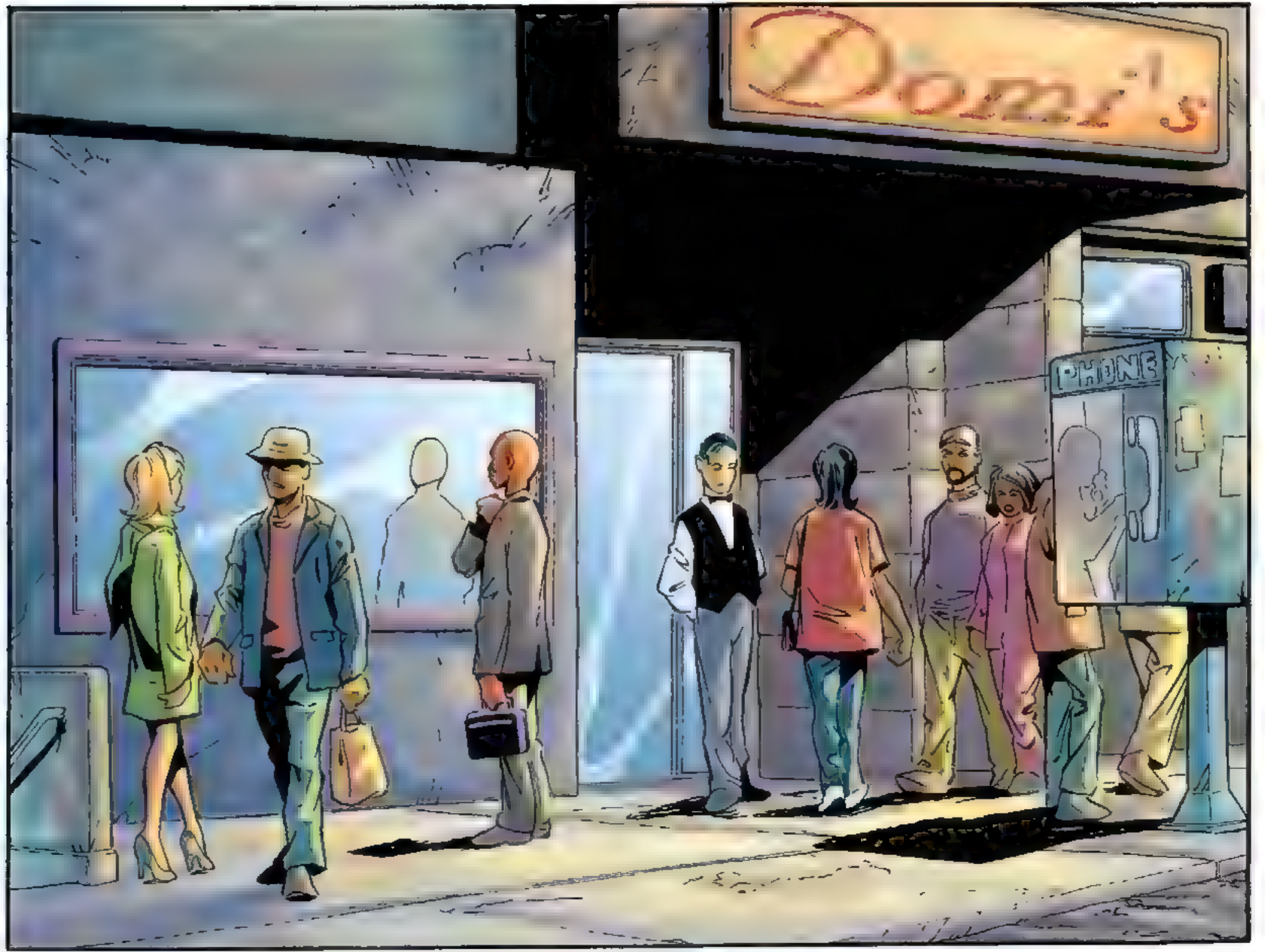
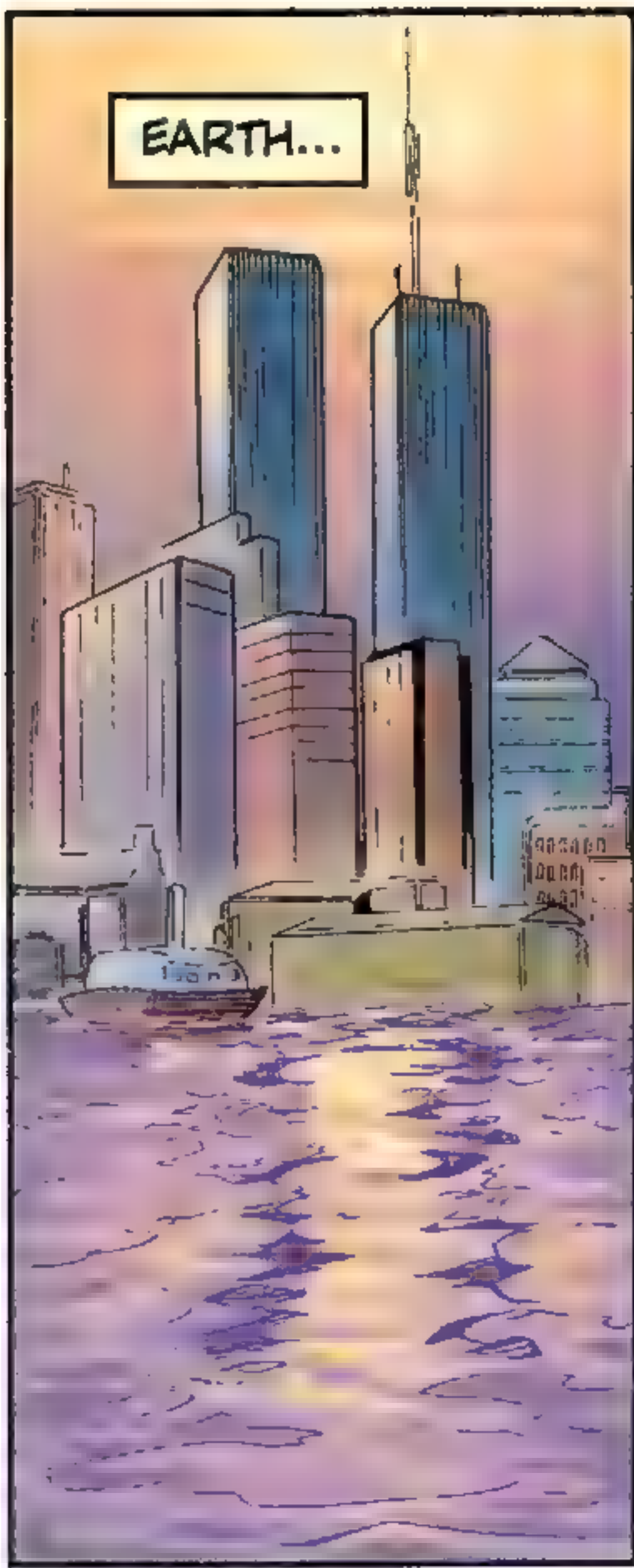


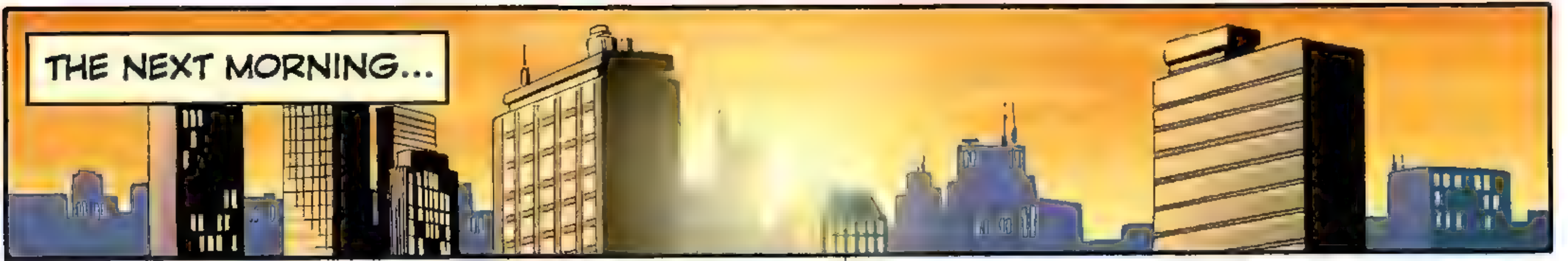


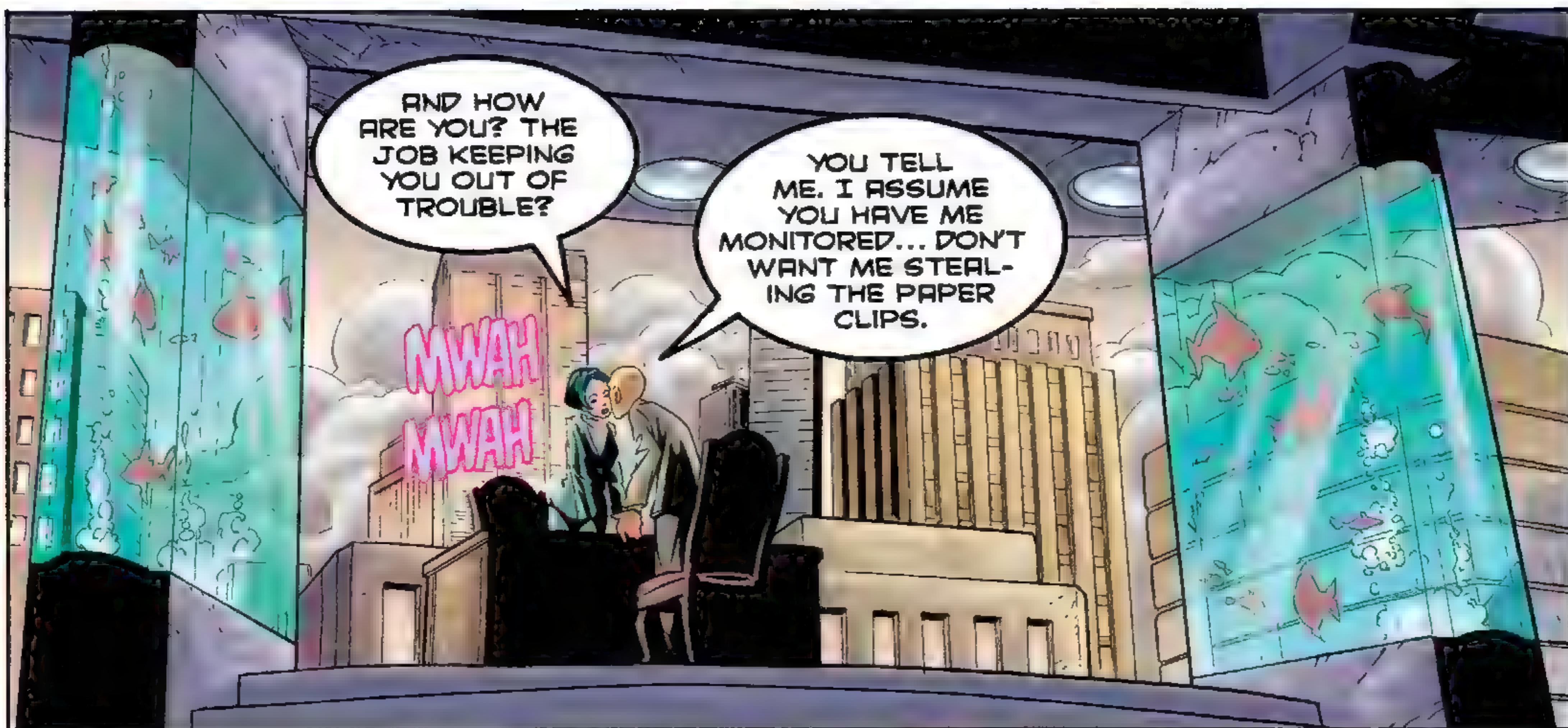
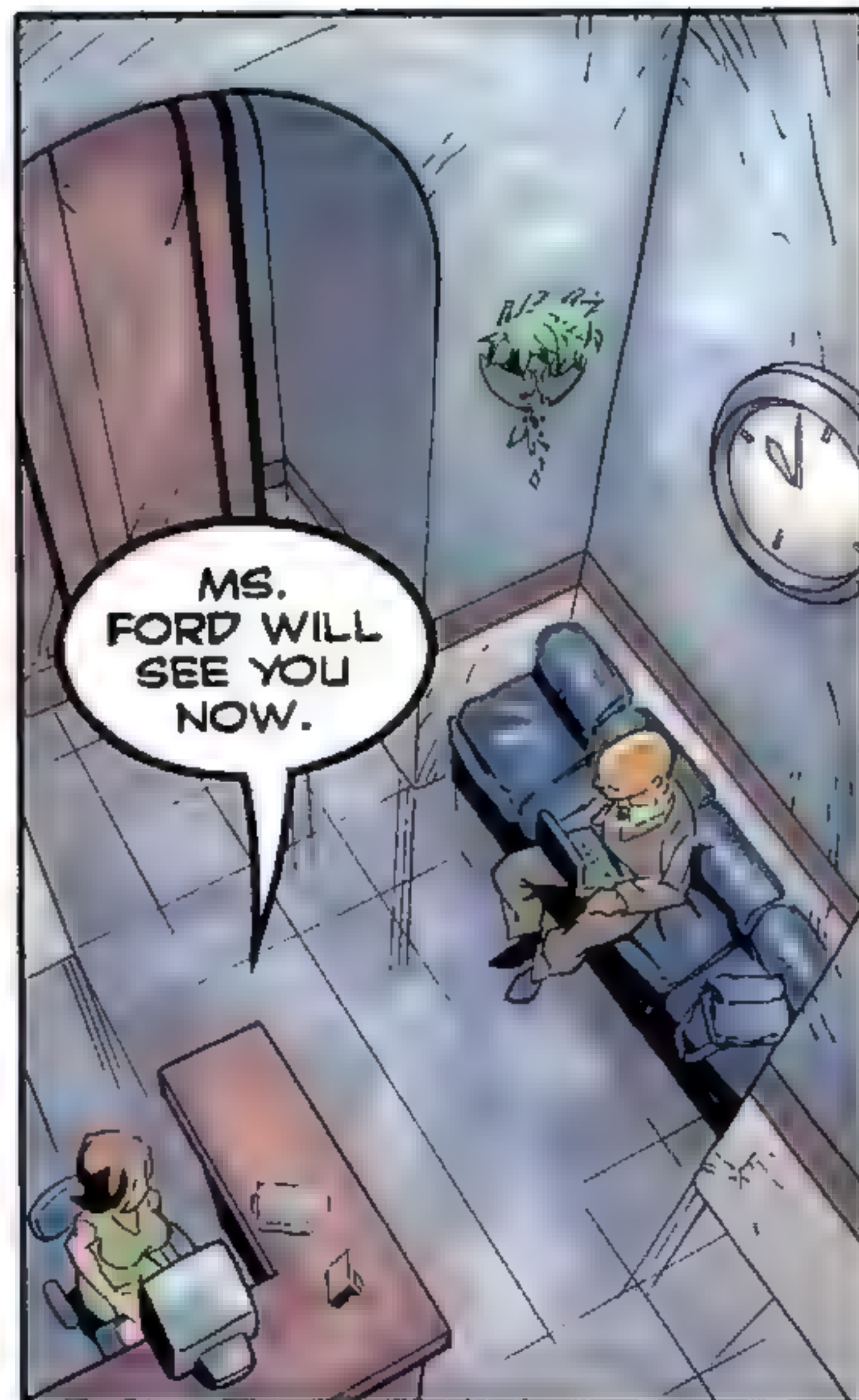
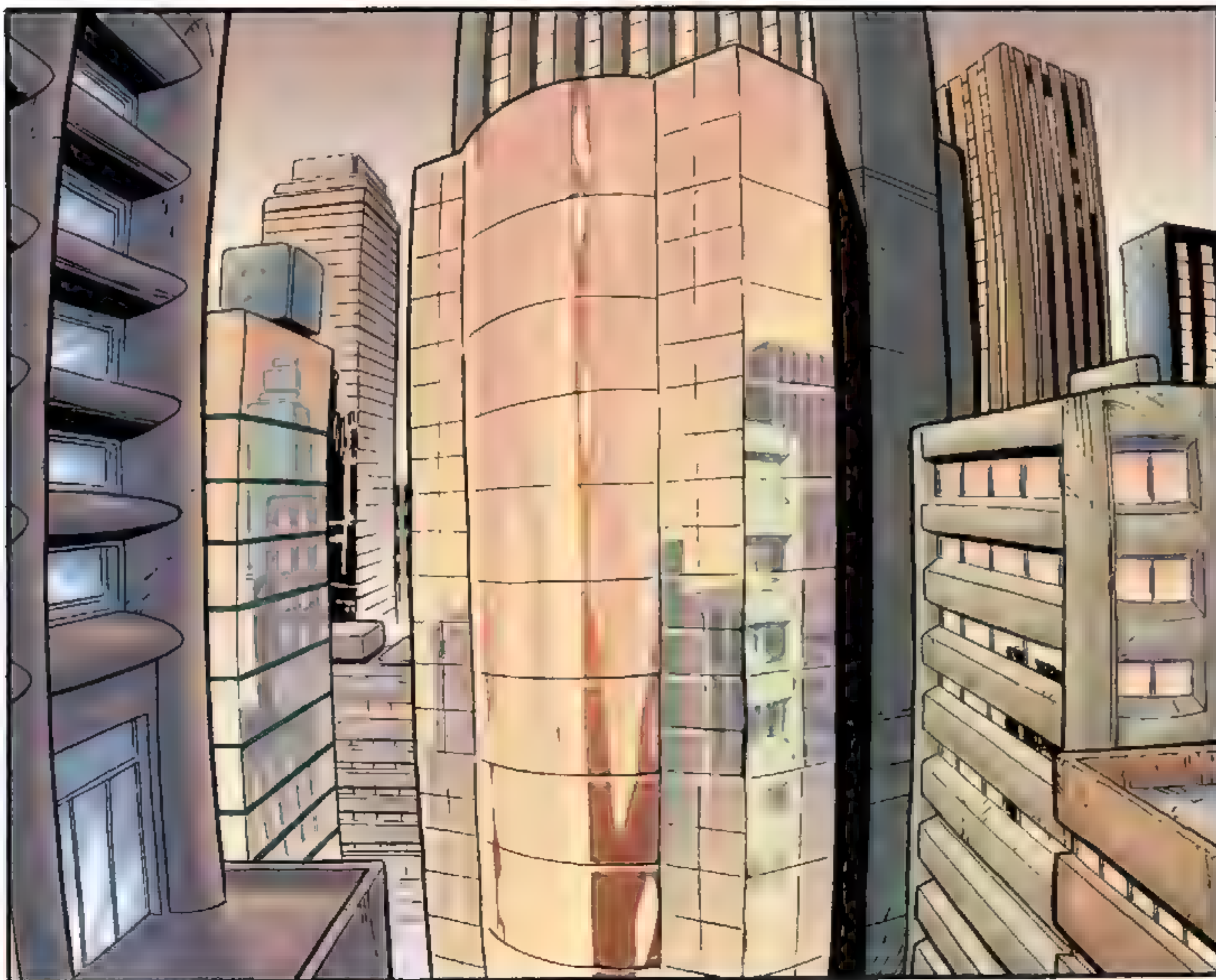










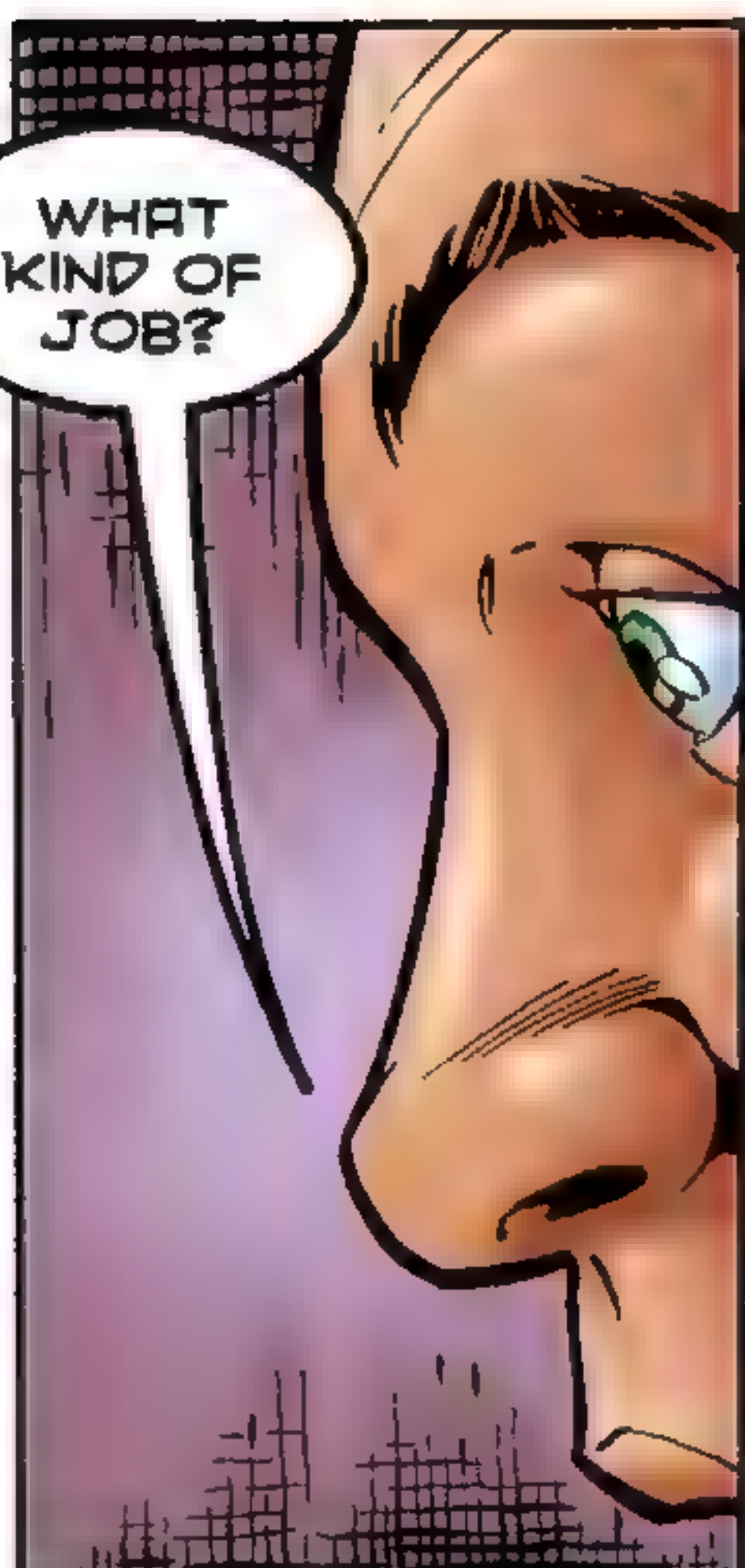




I DO HAVE A *JOB* IN MIND.

ANYTHING BUT DATA ENTRY.

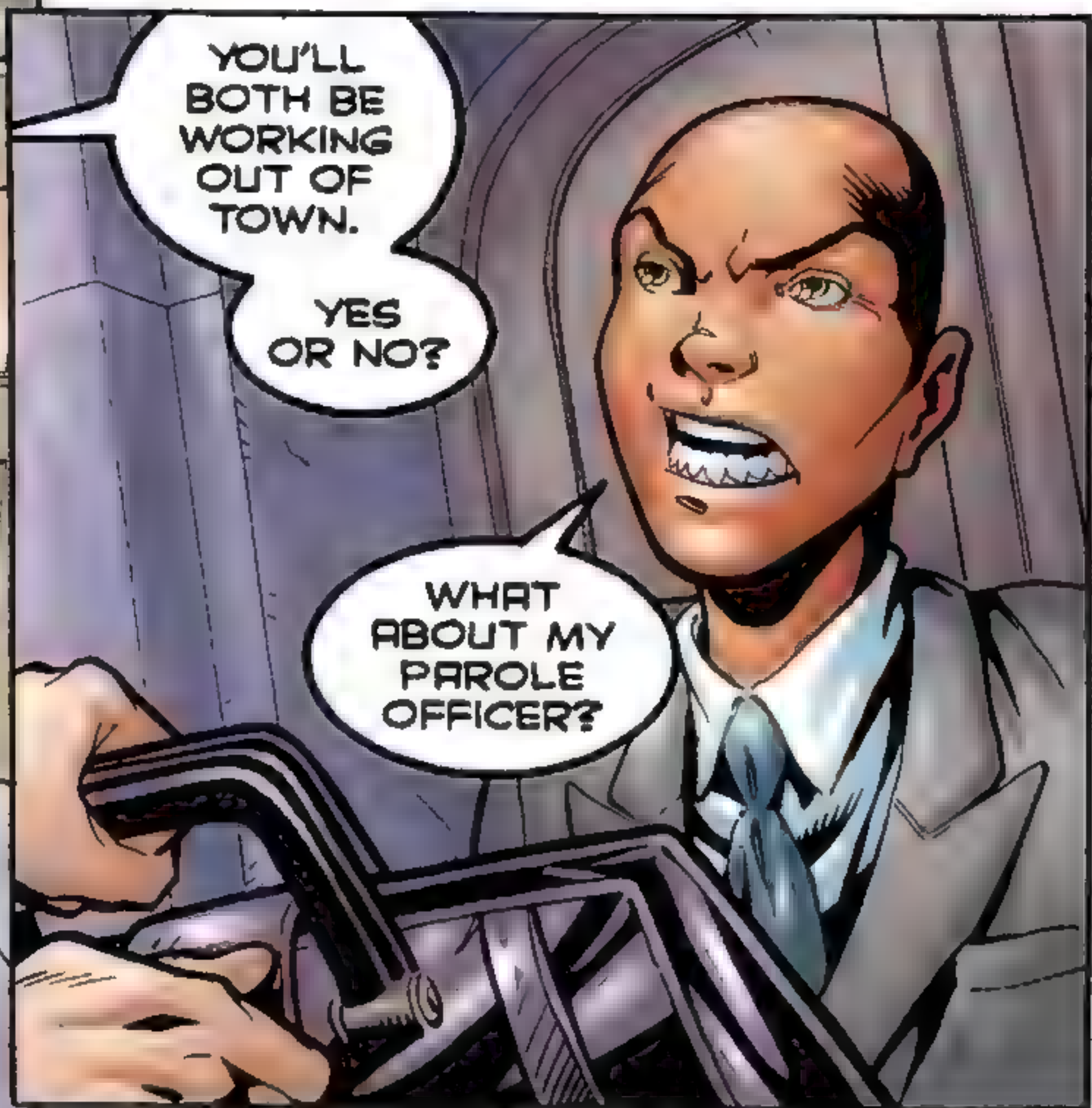
CHARLEY CAN BE IN TOWN THIS EVENING IF YOU SAY YES.



WHAT KIND OF JOB?



NO TIME FOR EXPLANATIONS. I'M EXPECTED IN A MEETING RIGHT NOW.



YOU'LL BOTH BE WORKING OUT OF TOWN.

YES OR NO?

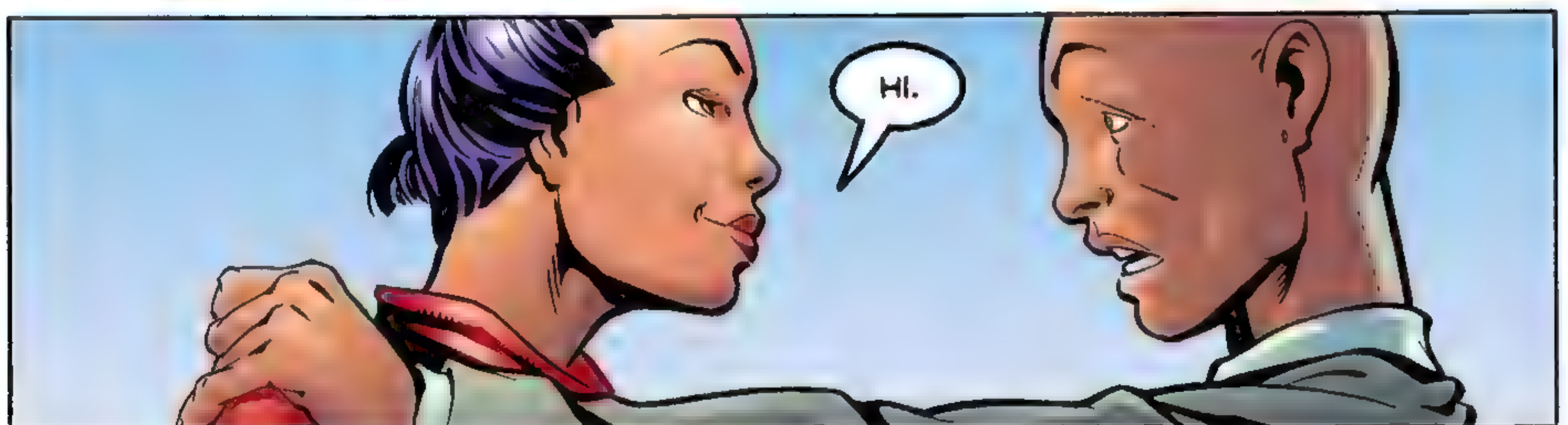
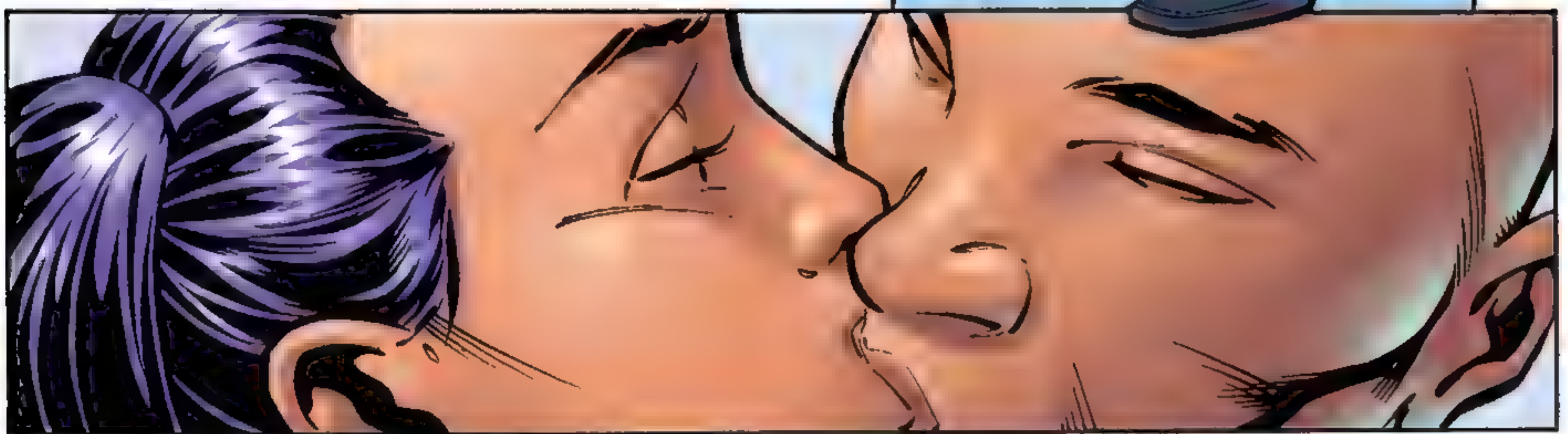
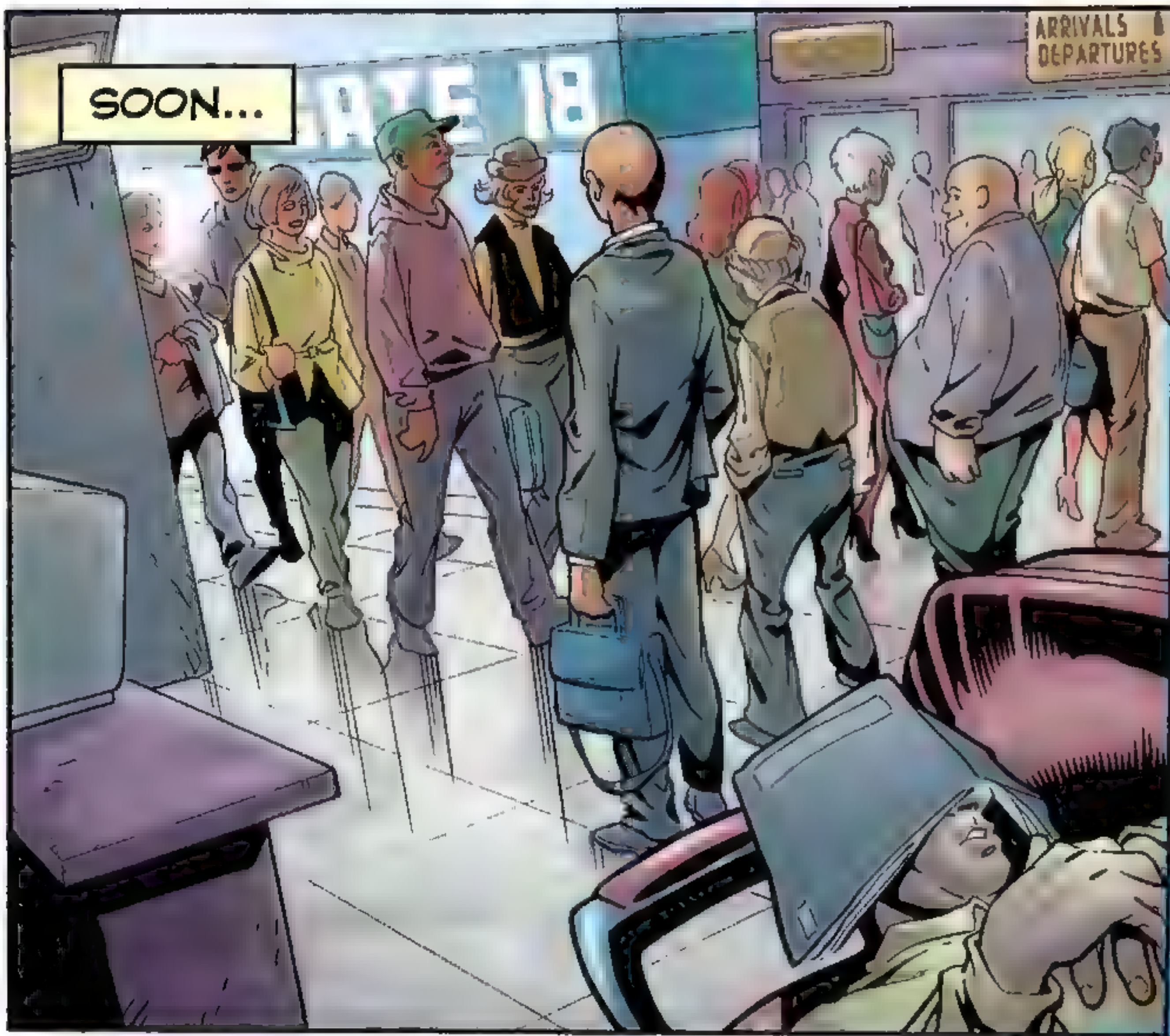
WHAT ABOUT MY PAROLE OFFICER?

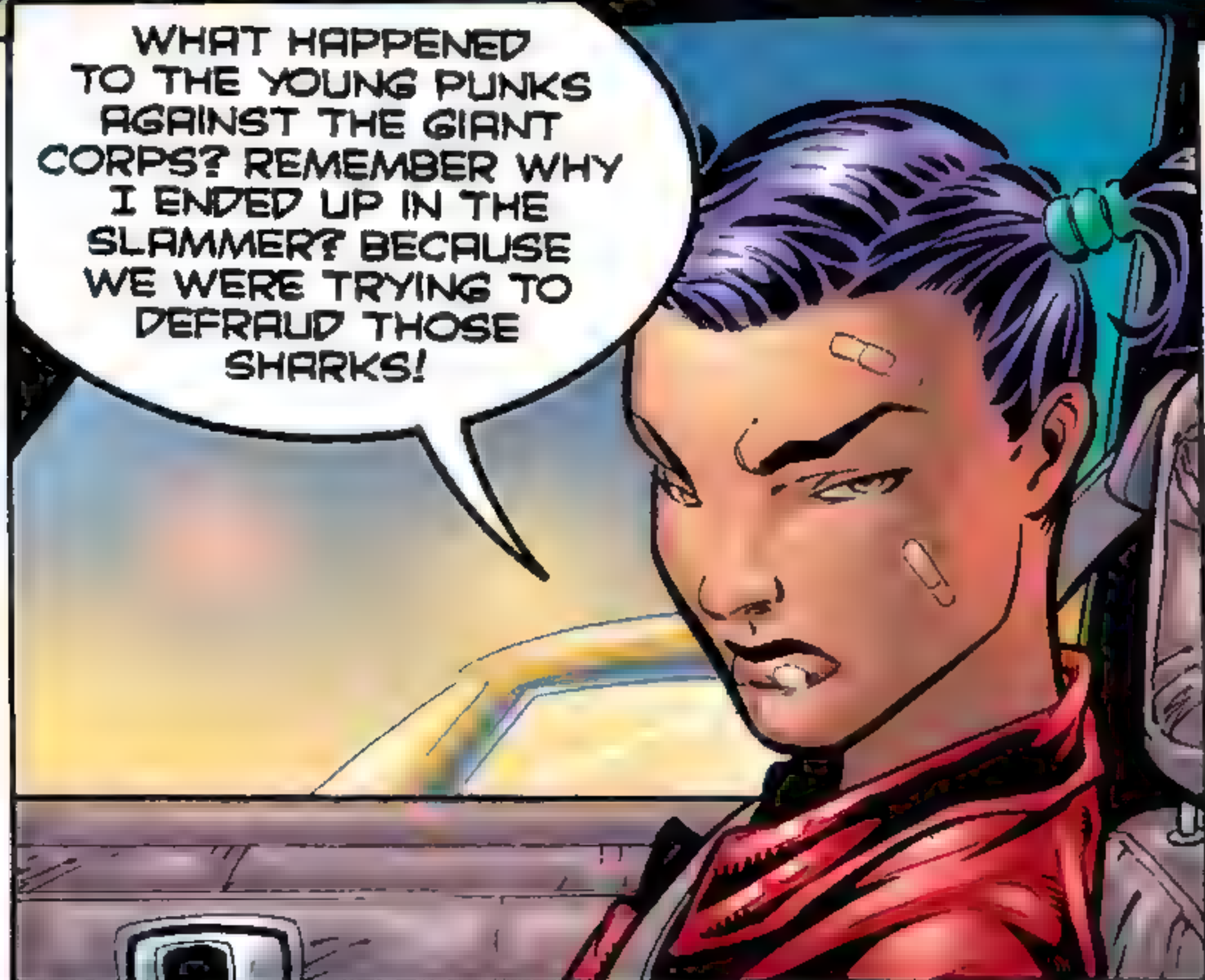
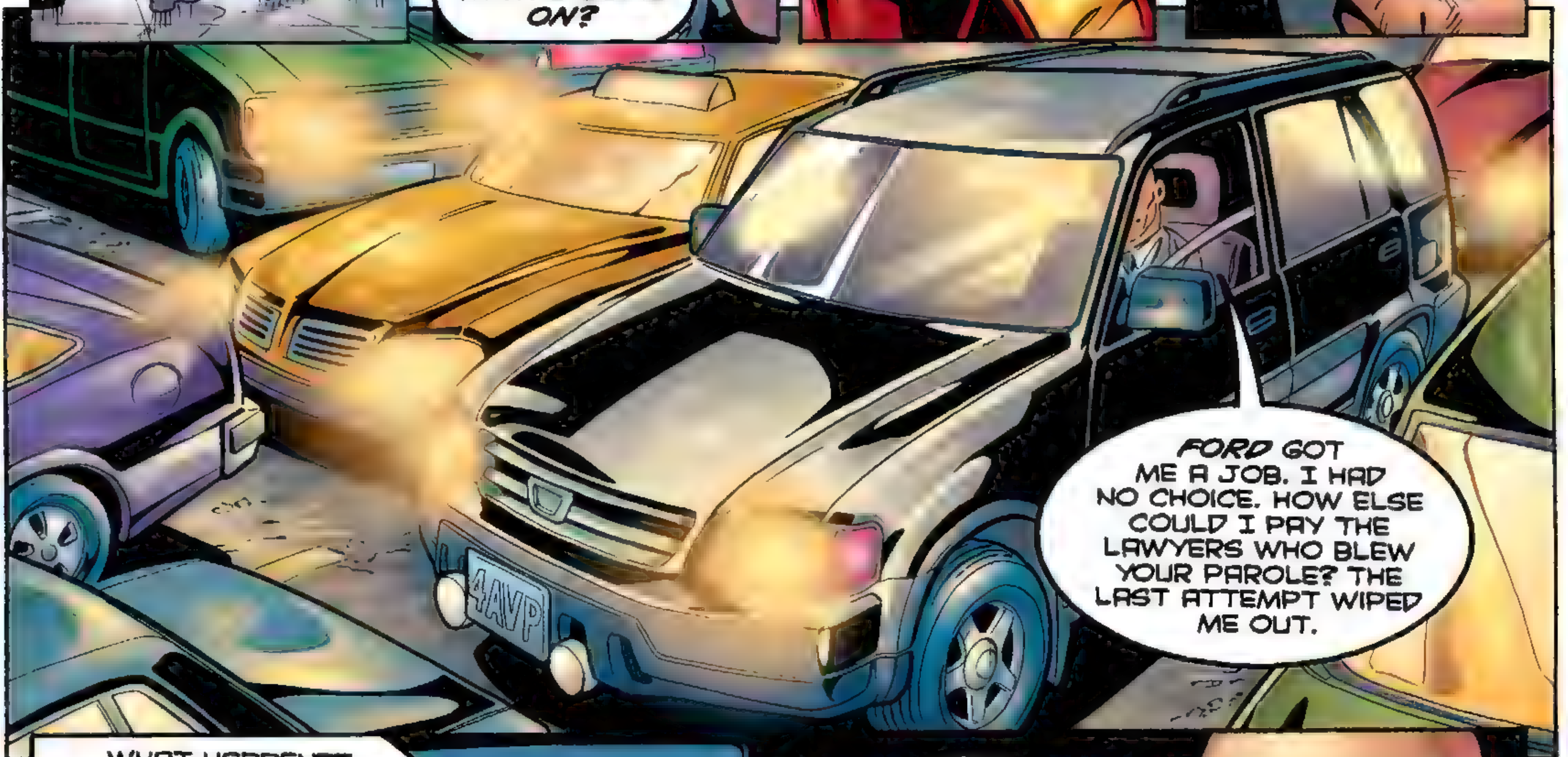
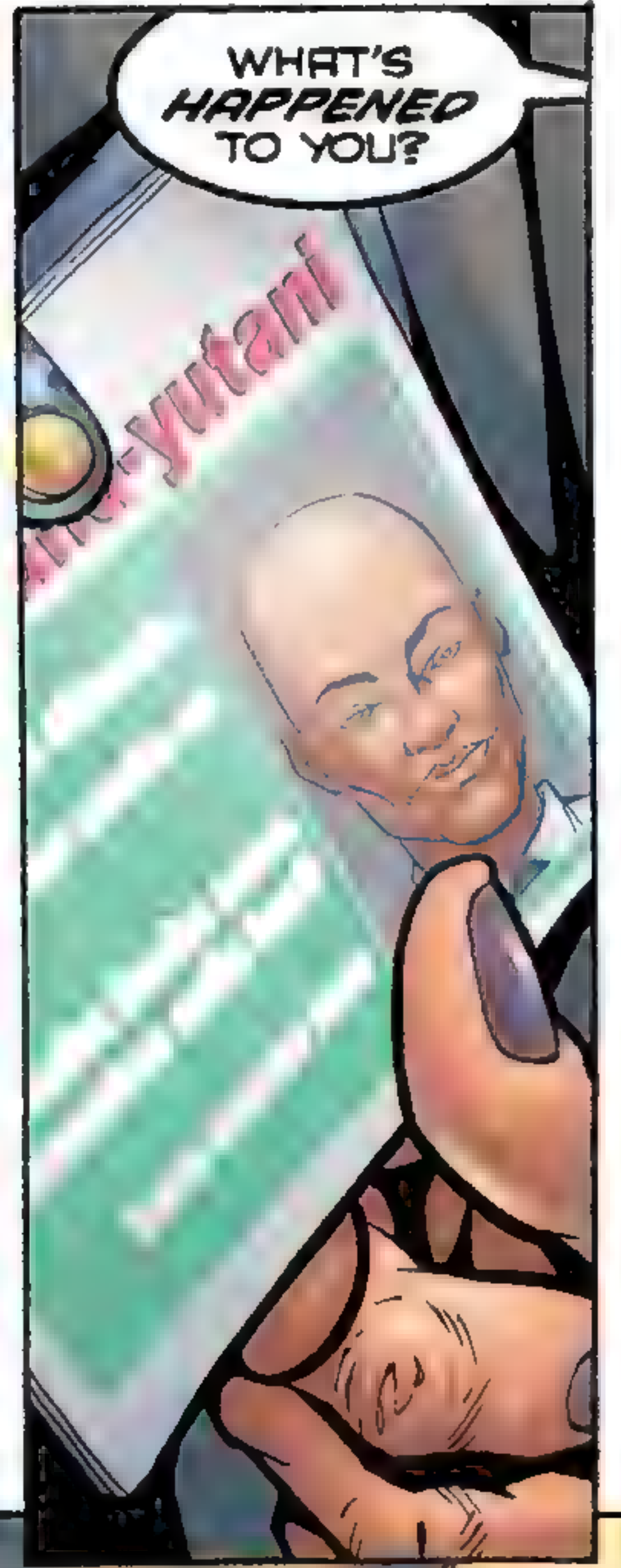
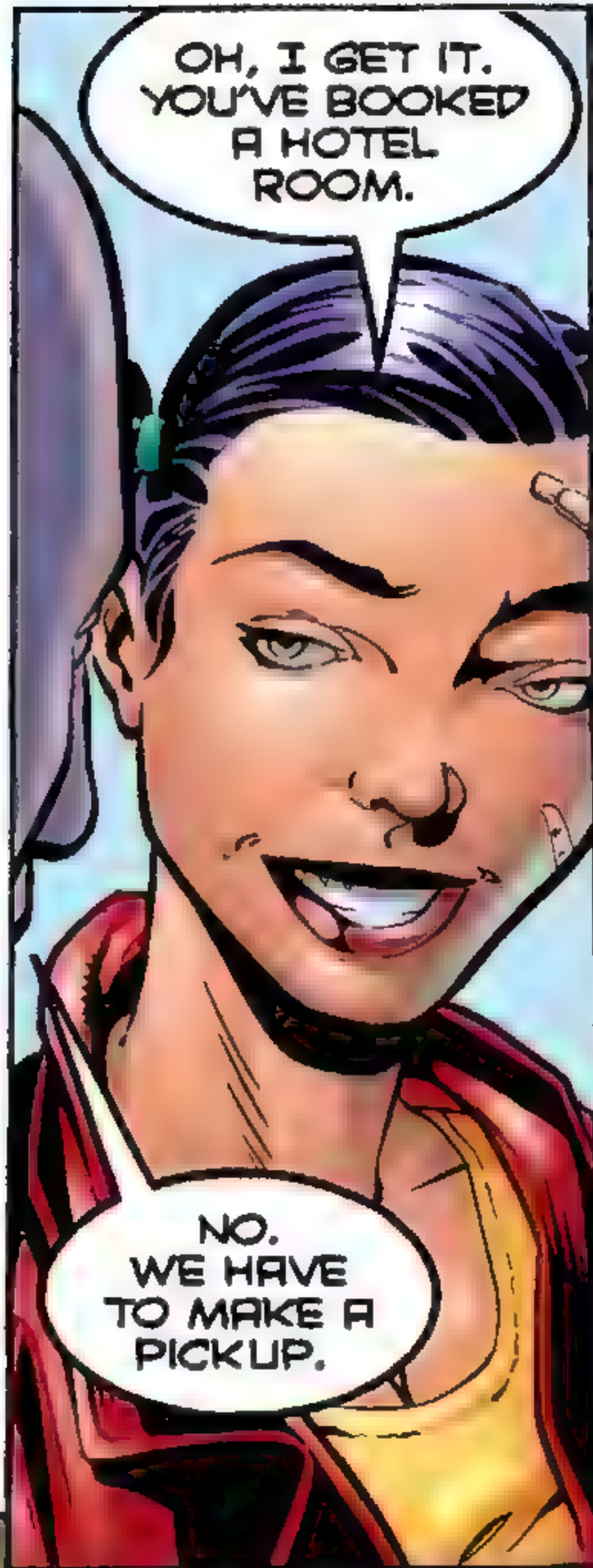
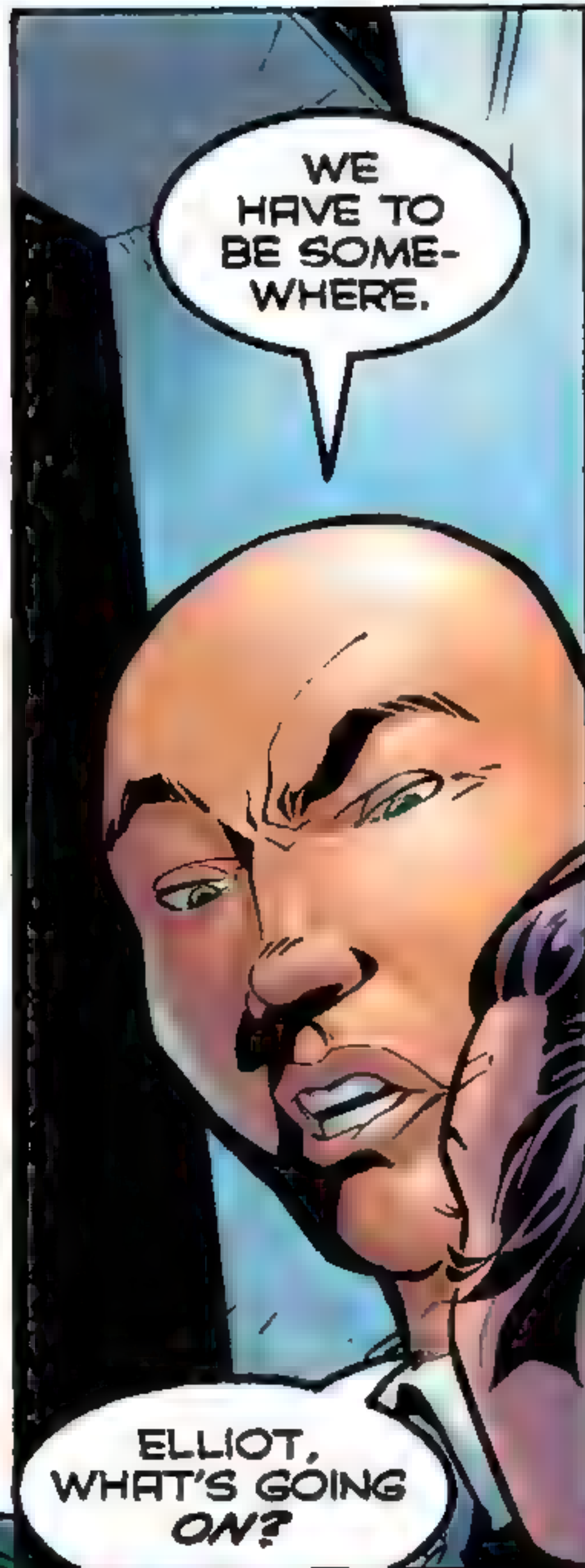


COMPANY PRISON, *COMPANY* PAROLE OFFICER. YES OR NO?

YES.

SHE'LL BE ARRIVING AT GATE 18. I'LL BE IN TOUCH.







ALL I KNOW
IS FORD SAID TO
RENDEZVOUS
HERE.

ELLIOT...

WHAT?

WE TAKE
OFF FROM
MIYAZAKI
STATION AT
20:00.

WHERE'S
FORD?

IN A
MEETING.



THANKS
FOR GETTING
ME OUT.

WE'RE
A TEAM,
RIGHT?

RIGHT.



I
GUESS
THE DEAL'S
OFF.

THE
DISK WILL
TELL YOU ALL
YOU NEED TO
KNOW.

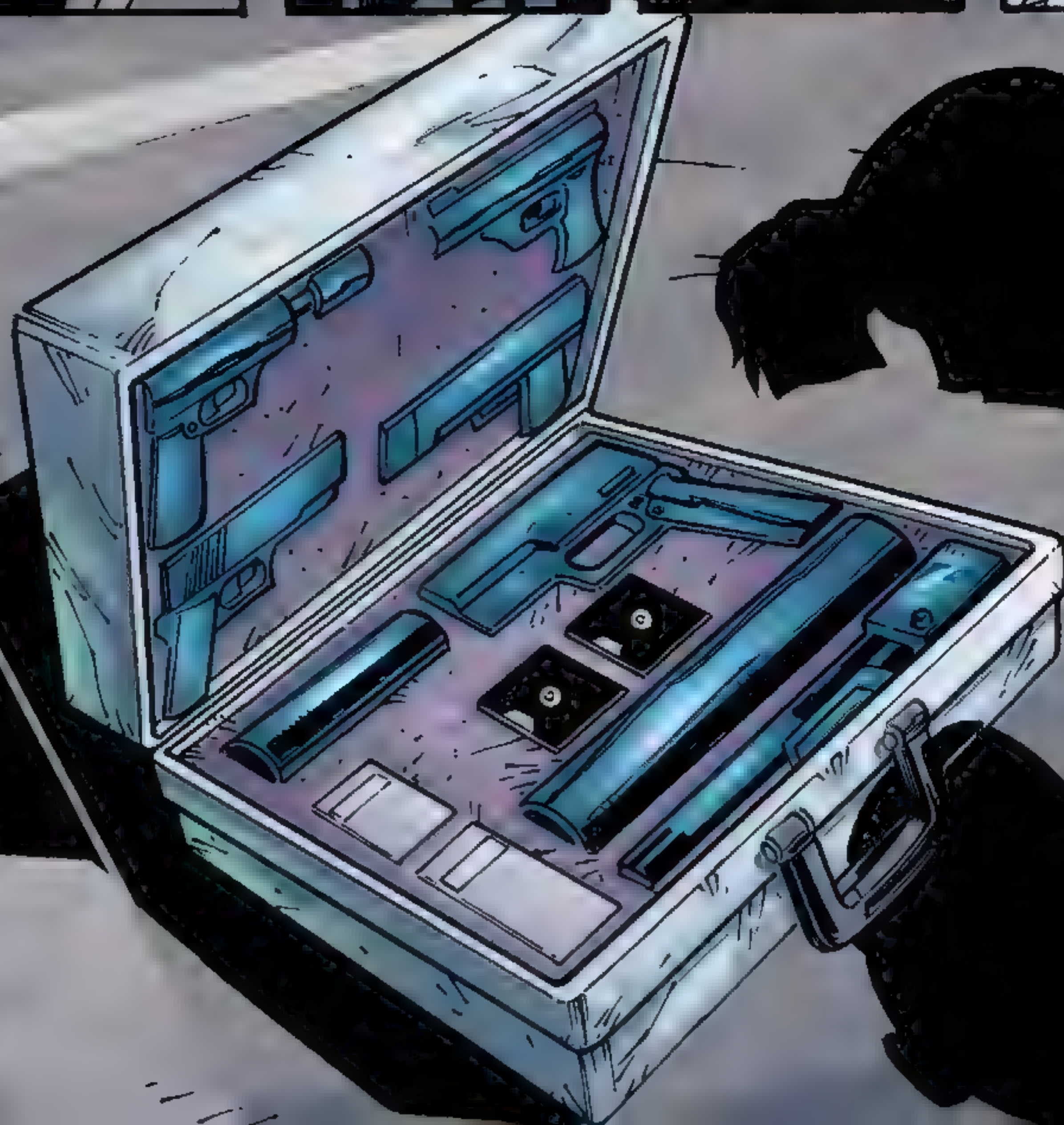
LIKE, WHO
THE HELL
YOU ARE?

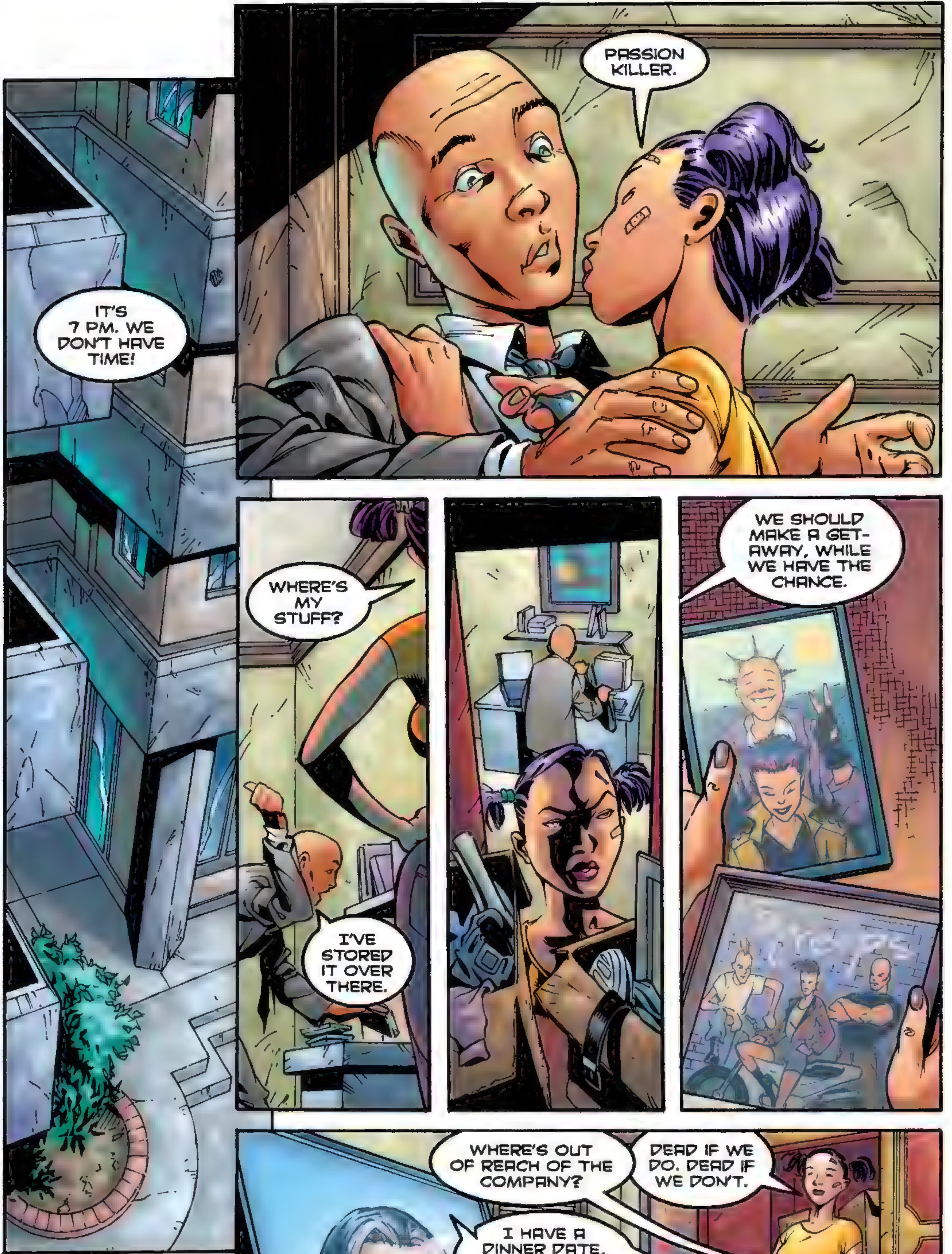
CHARLEY!
DON'T...

I'M
PEARCE. HE'S
WOZ, SHE'S
ELOMO. WE'LL BE
MAKING SURE YOU
BEHAVE YOUR-
SELVES

19:55
AT THE
STATION OR
WE'LL LEAVE
WITHOUT
YOU!

WHAT
IS IT?





PASSION
KILLER.

IT'S
7 PM. WE
DON'T HAVE
TIME!

WHERE'S
MY
STUFF?

I'VE
STORED
IT OVER
THERE.

WE SHOULD
MAKE A GET-
AWAY, WHILE
WE HAVE THE
CHANCE.

WHERE'S OUT
OF REACH OF THE
COMPANY?

DEAD IF WE
DO. DEAD IF
WE DON'T.

I HAVE A
DINNER DATE,
SO I'LL MAKE
THIS QUICK.



TAPPAN ROUTINE OR THE MITNICK TAPE-WORM? I MIGHT NEED BOTH.



NOTHING, MONEY. JUST TALKING TO MYSELF.

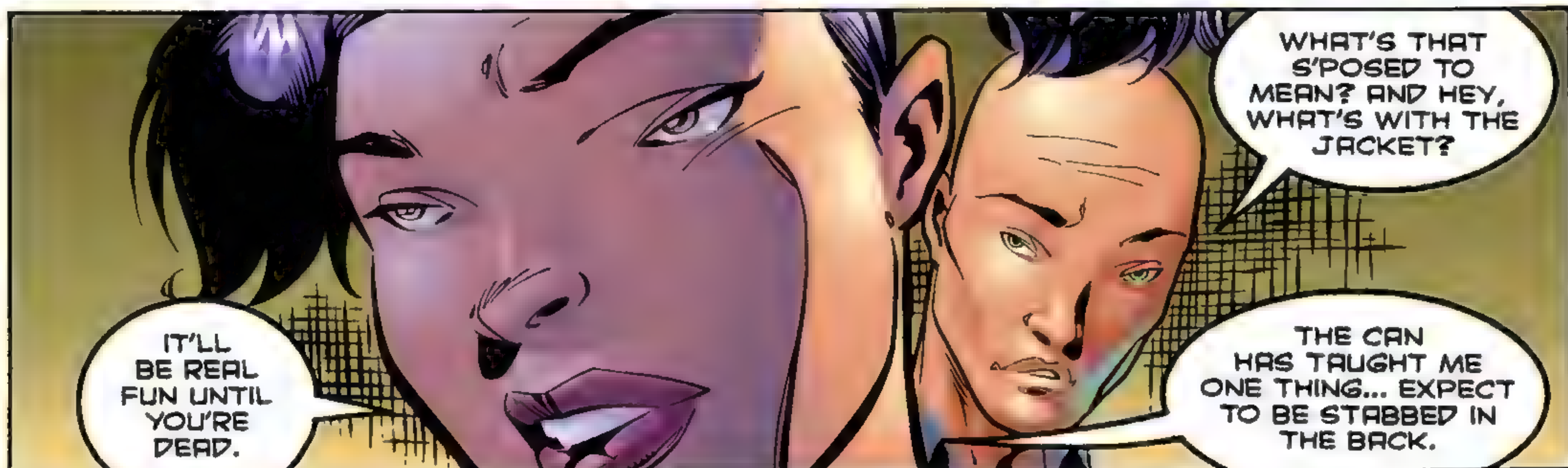
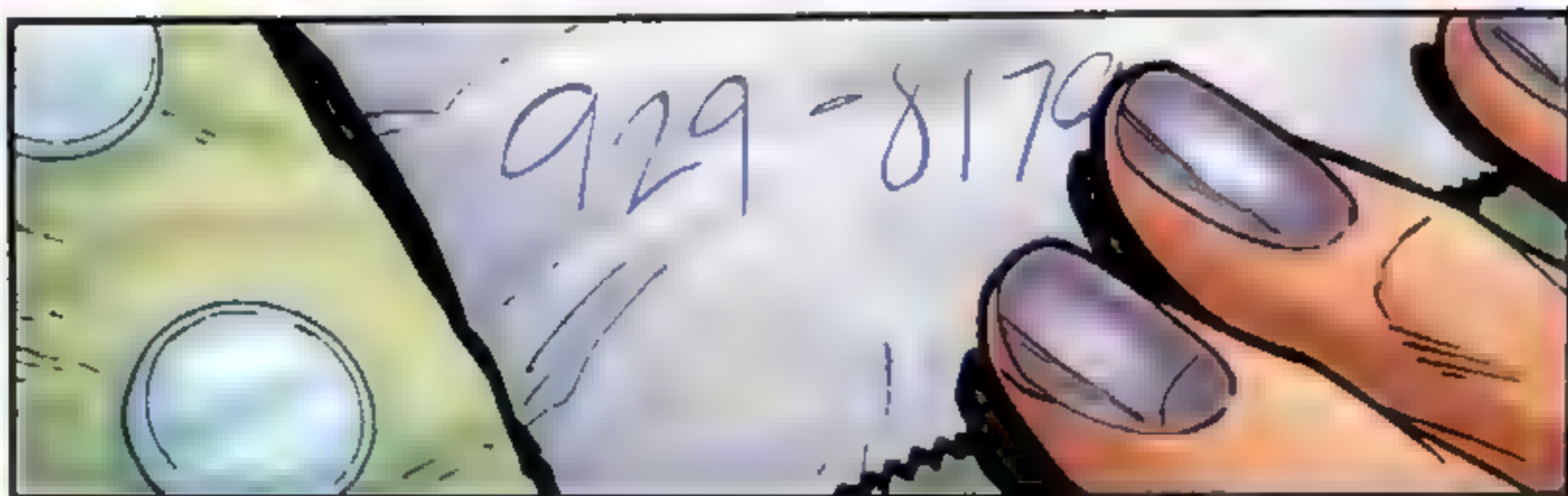
CRACK THE SAFE AND TAKE THE CONTENTS, AFTER WHICH I WILL GIVE YOU THE PASSWORD FOR THE GETAWAY VEHICLE.

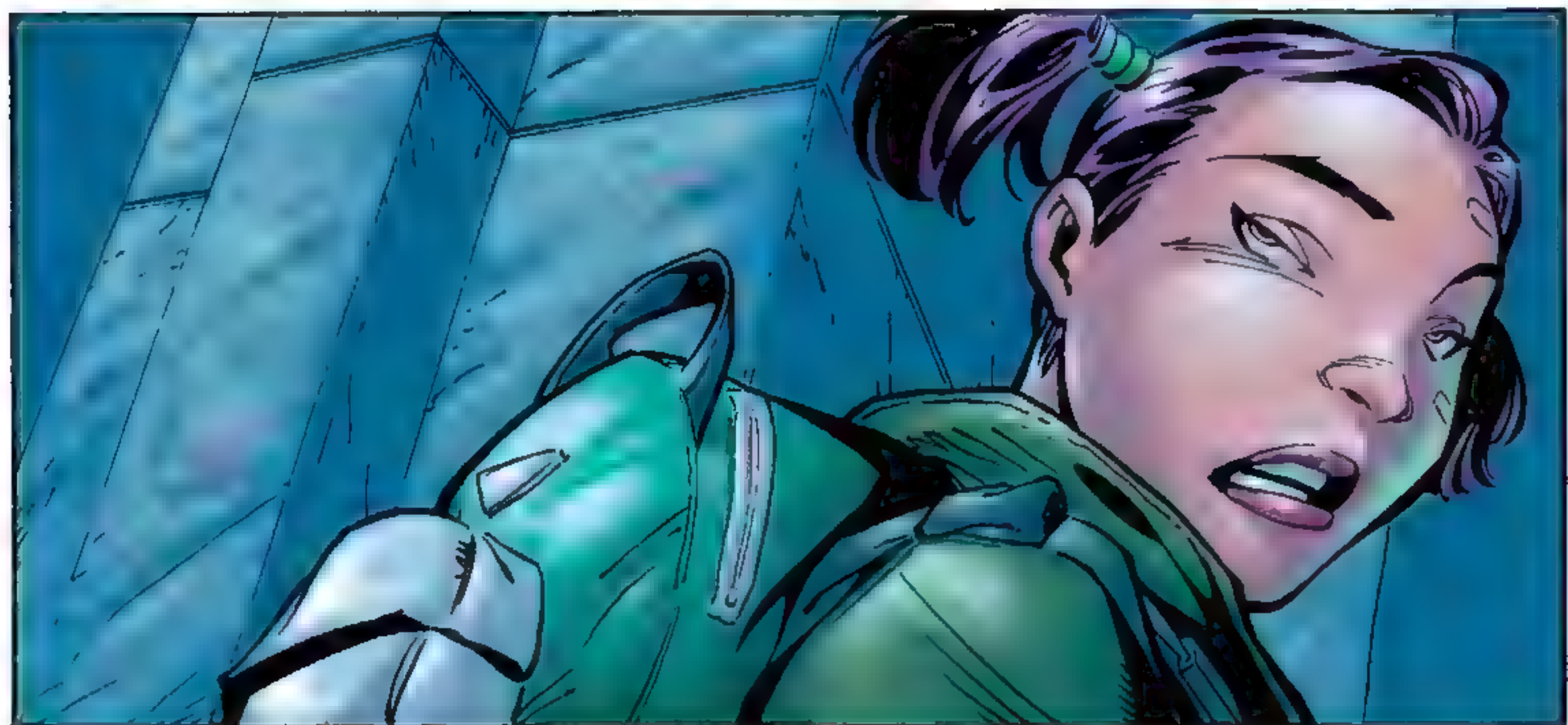
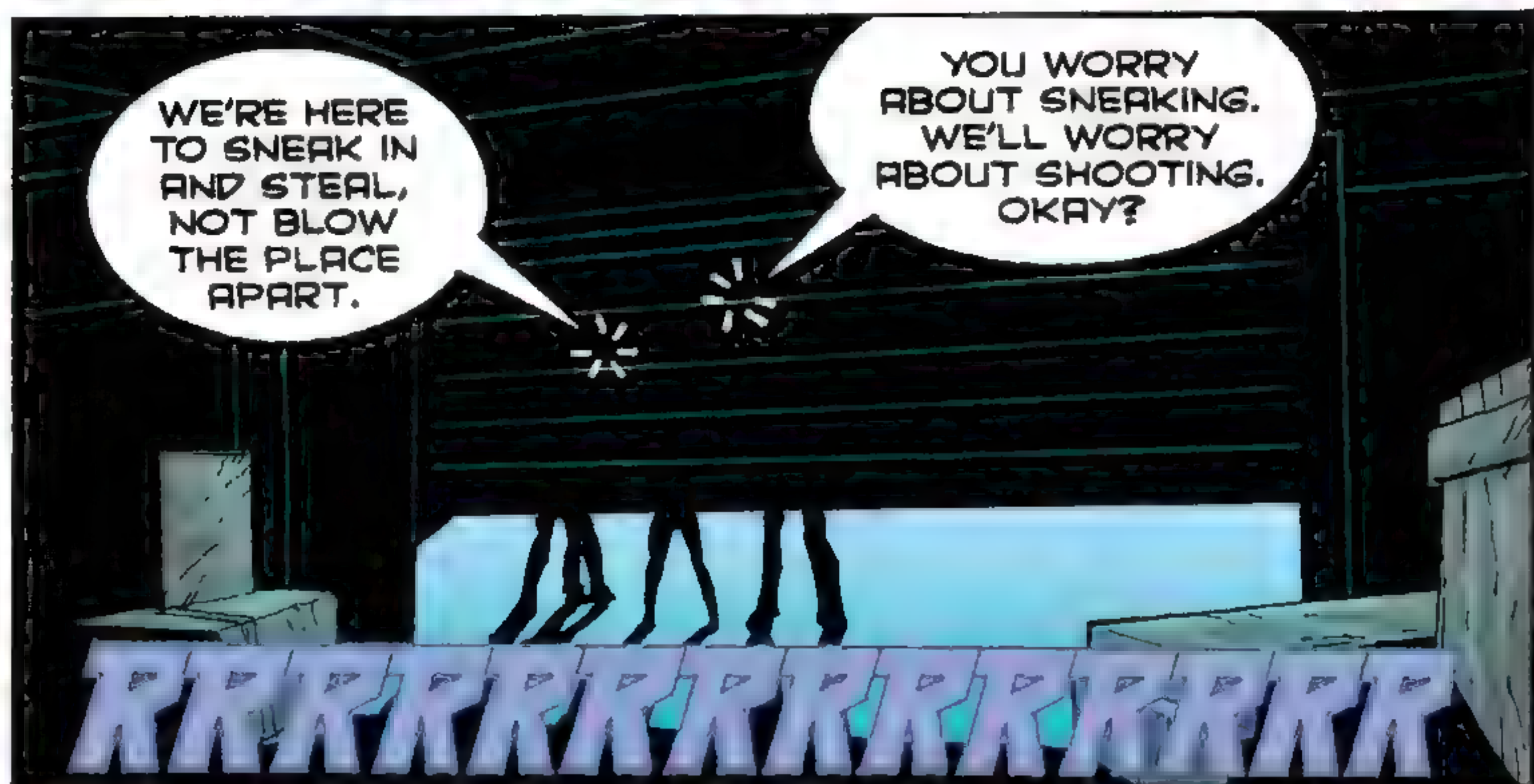


MY ASSOCIATES WILL ENSURE YOU DON'T GO ASTRAY. NO LOOT, NO PASSWORD, NO GETAWAY.



YOU HAVEN'T HAD MUCH TIME TO BECOME... RE-ACQUAINTED, SO, AS AN EXTRA INCENTIVE, I HAVE TWO TICKETS FOR A ROMANTIC HOLIDAY DESTINATION WAITING FOR YOU WHEN YOU GET BACK. CIAO.









SCHRAK

B-KOOM



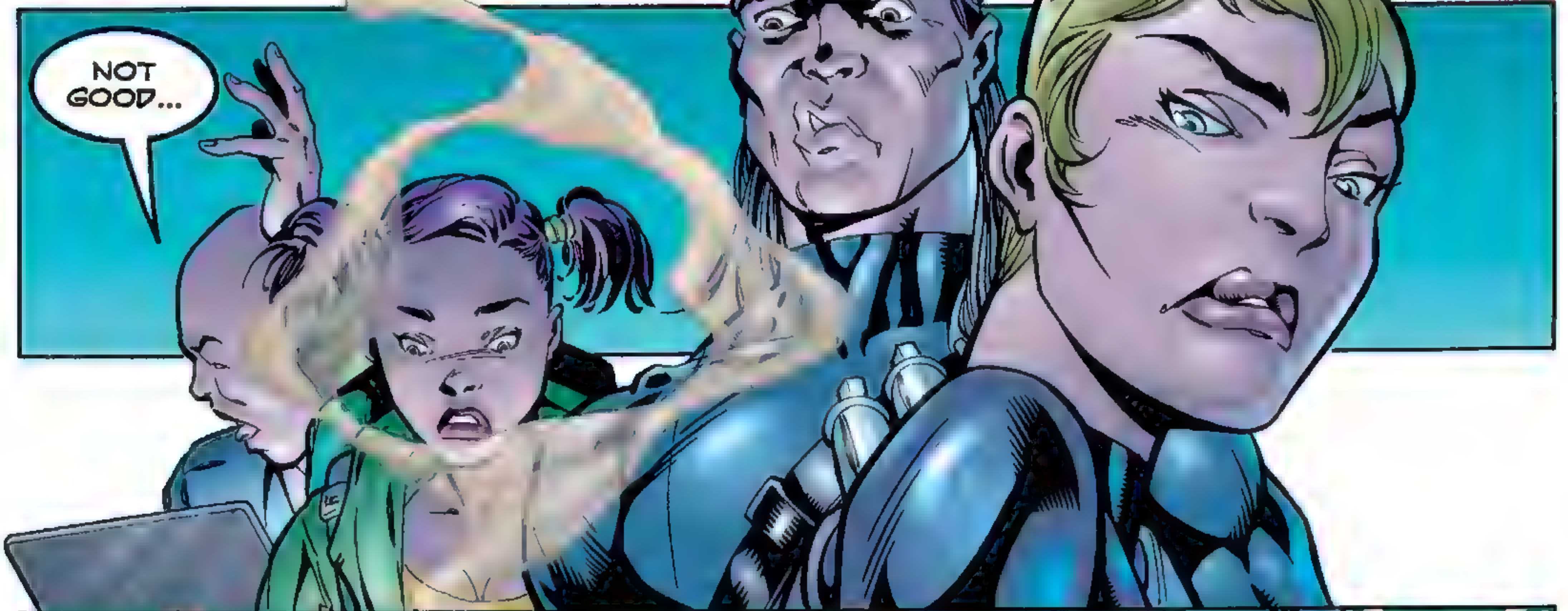


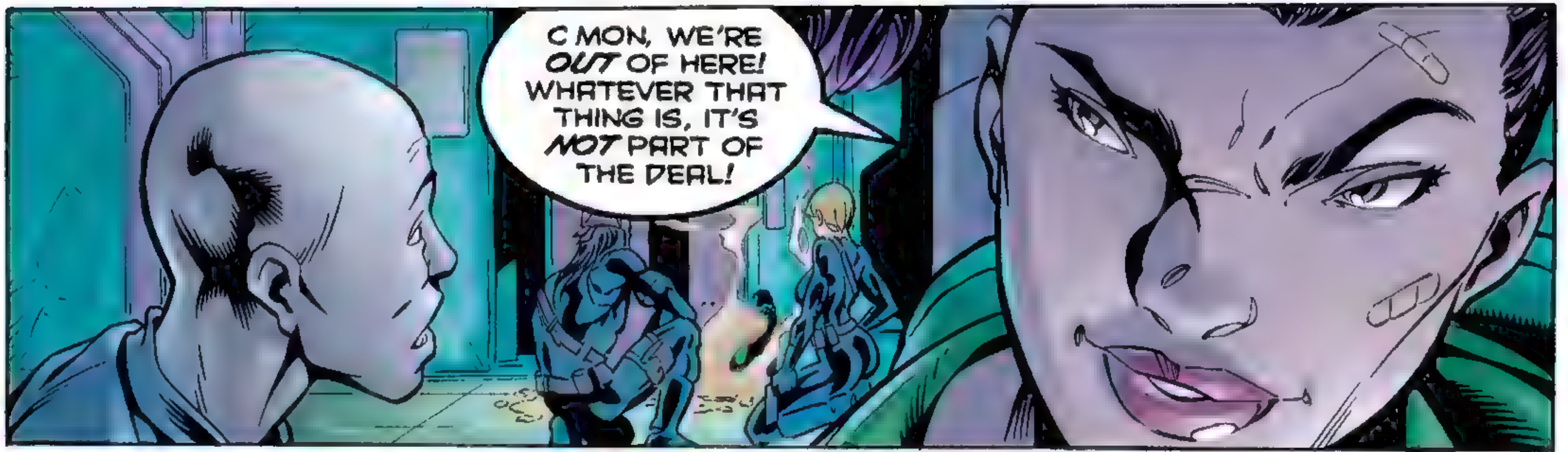


BUDDA BUD A BUD!

WARRGHHH!

HSSSSSSSSSS





C MON, WE'RE
OUT OF HERE!
WHATEVER THAT
THING IS, IT'S
NOT PART OF
THE DEAL!



ALL
BETS
ARE
OFF!

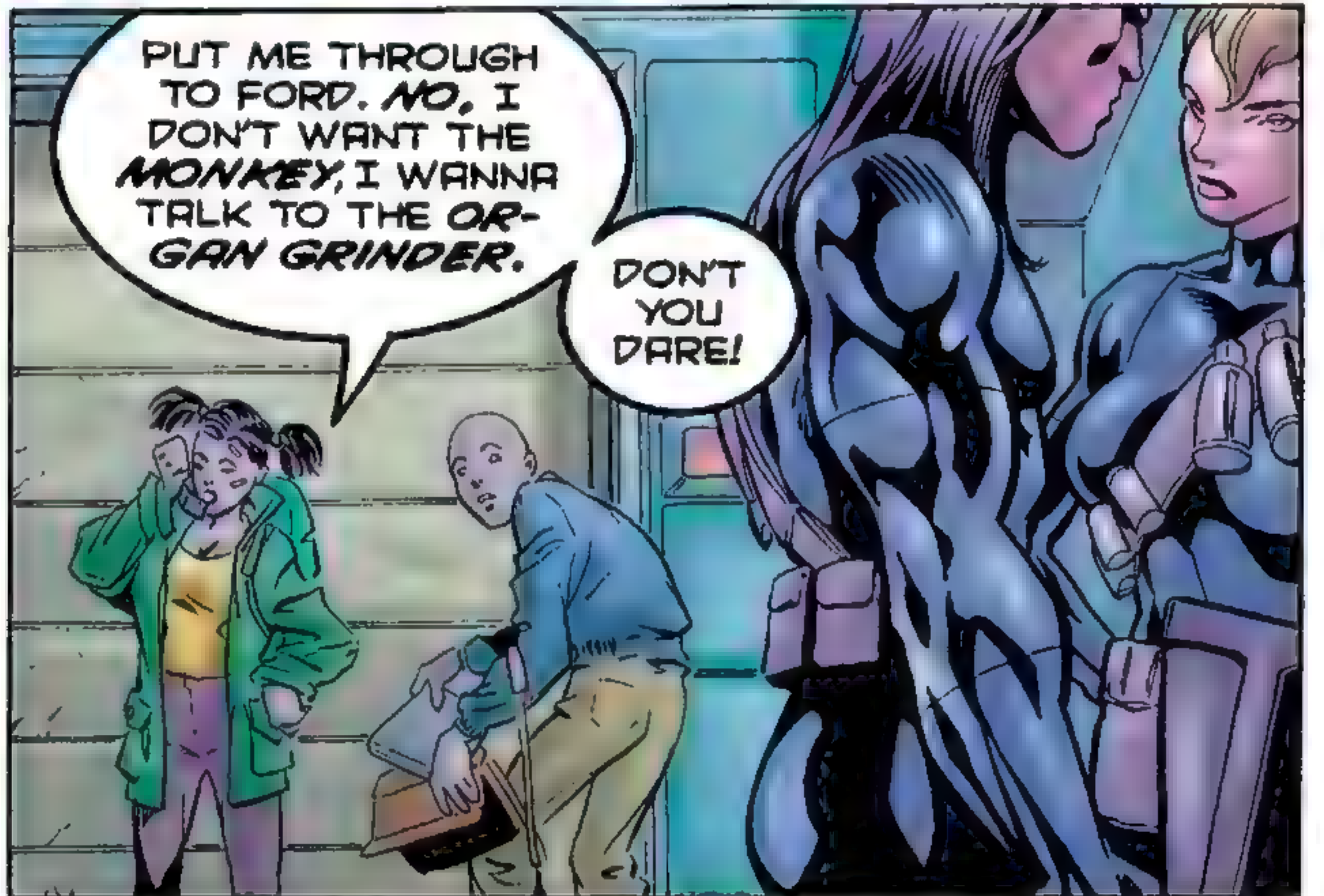
I'LL SEE IF I
CAN HACK THE
LOCKS!



FORD IS
GONNA TAKE
US HOME!

BEEP
BEEP
BEEP

NOTHING.
THE PLACE
HAS **LOCKED**
DOWN AFTER
THE POWER CUT.
MAYBE FORD HAS
THE OVERRIDE
CODES?



PUT ME THROUGH
TO FORD. **NO**, I
DON'T WANT THE
MONKEY, I WANNA
TALK TO THE **OR-**
GAN GRINDER.

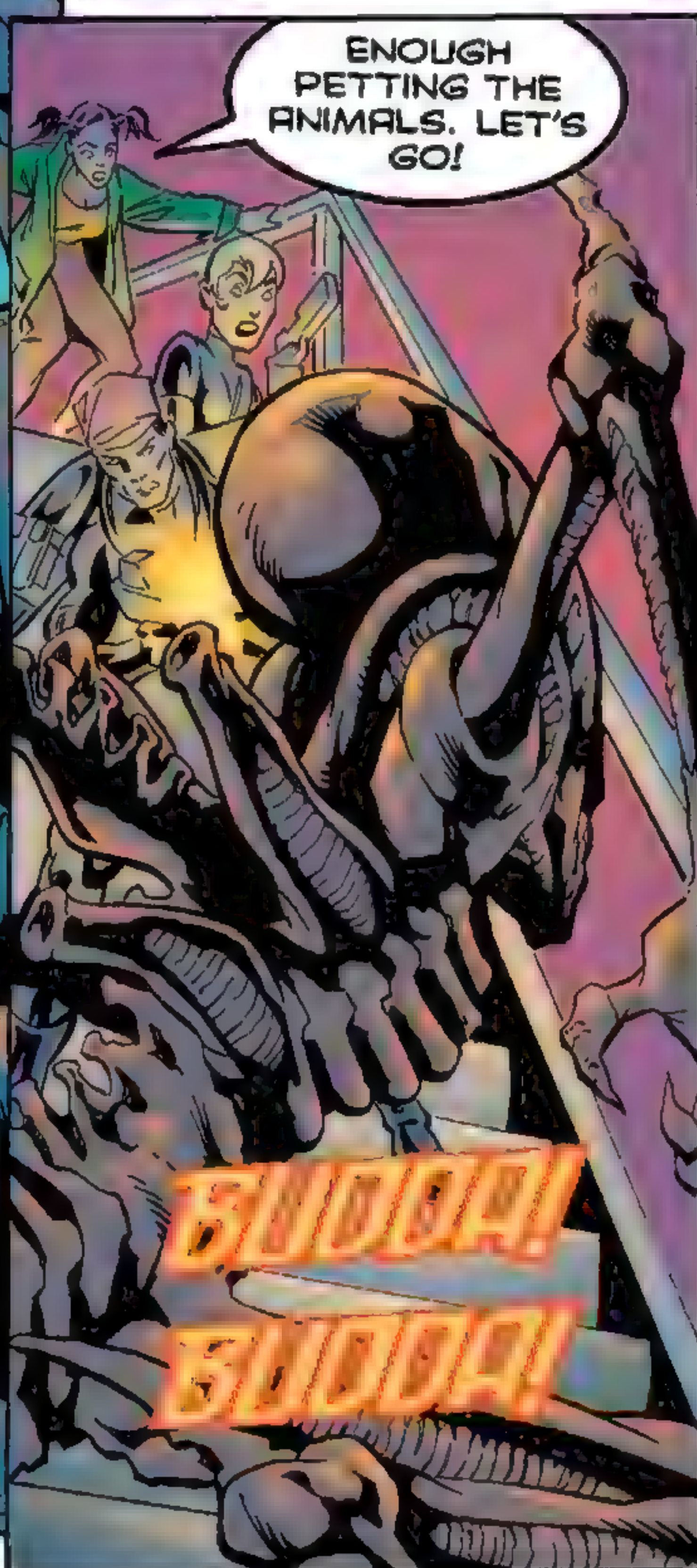
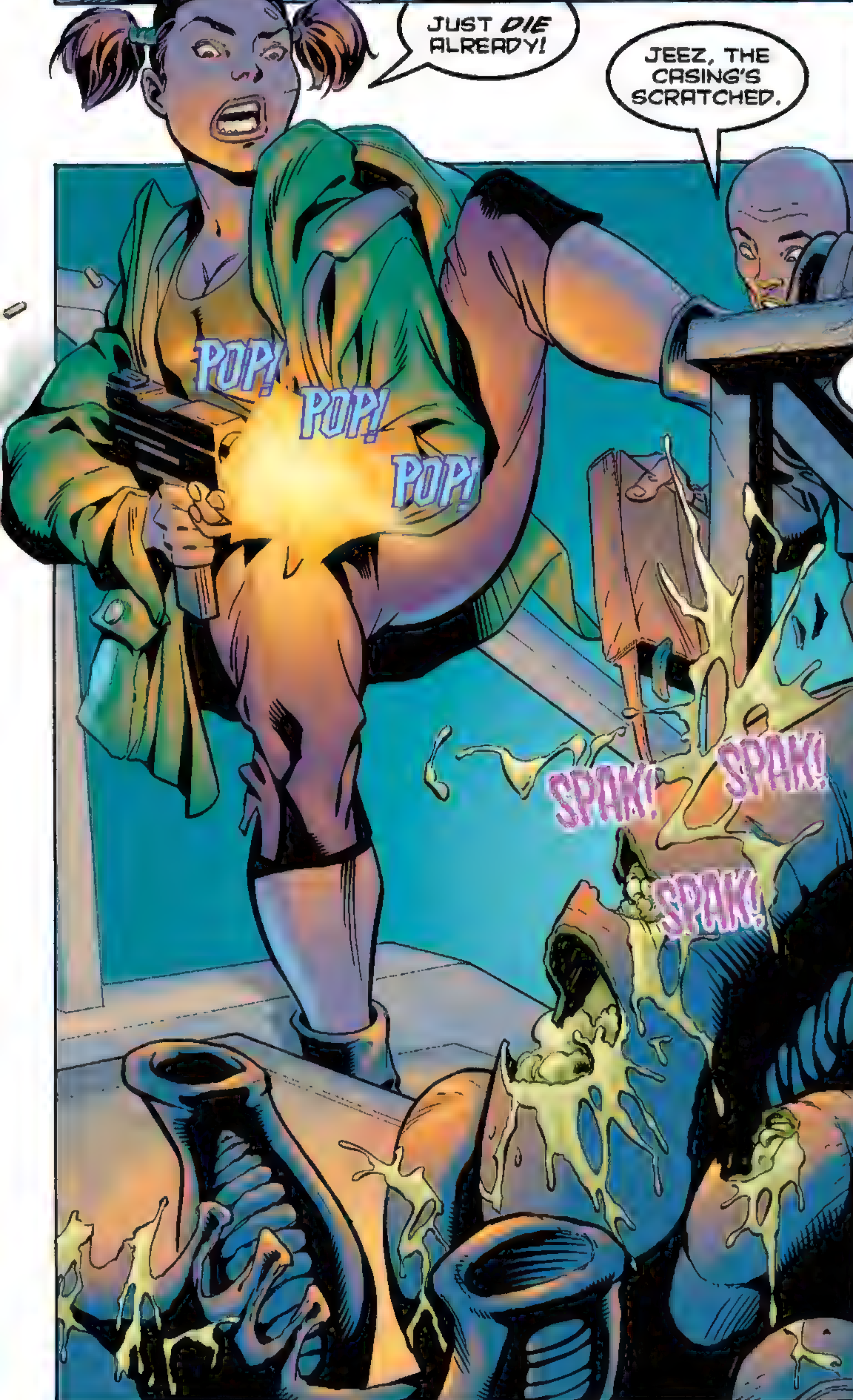
DON'T
YOU
DARE!

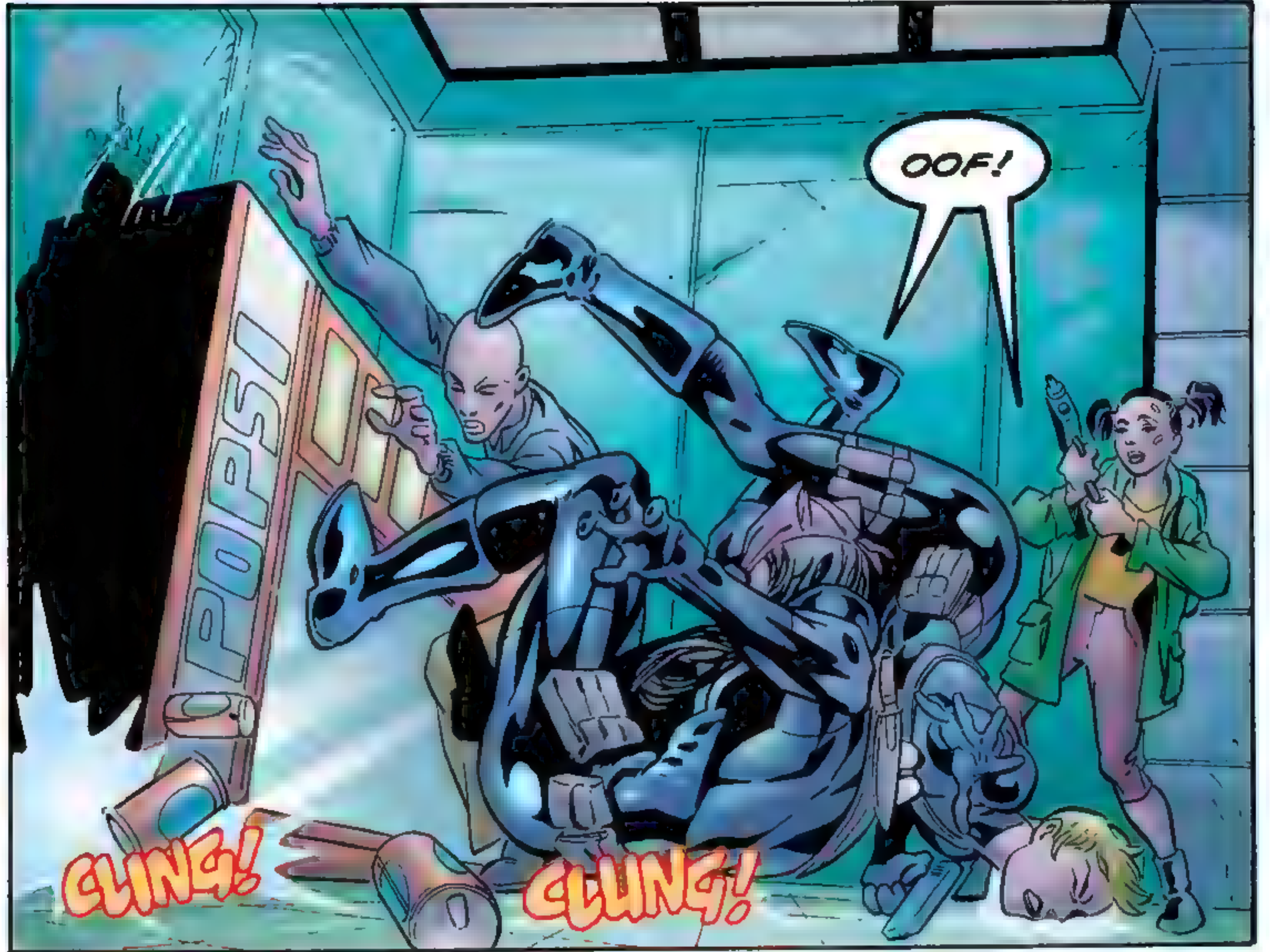


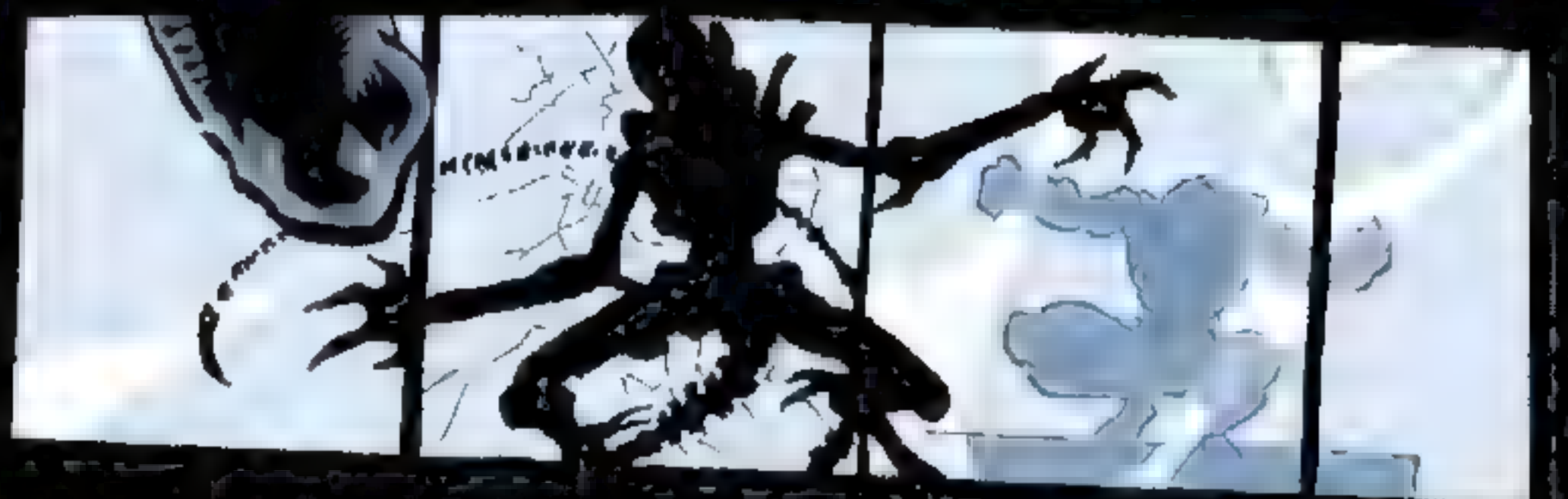
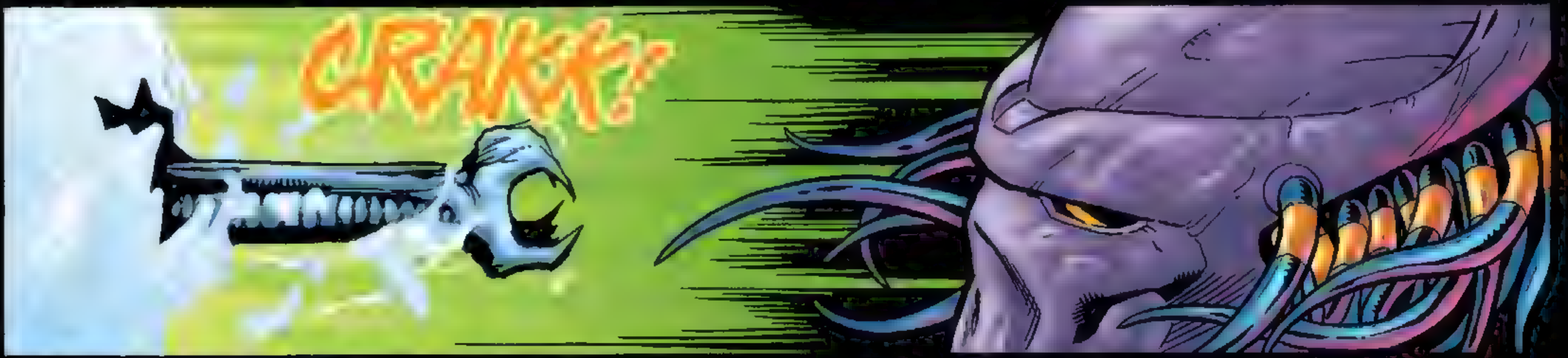
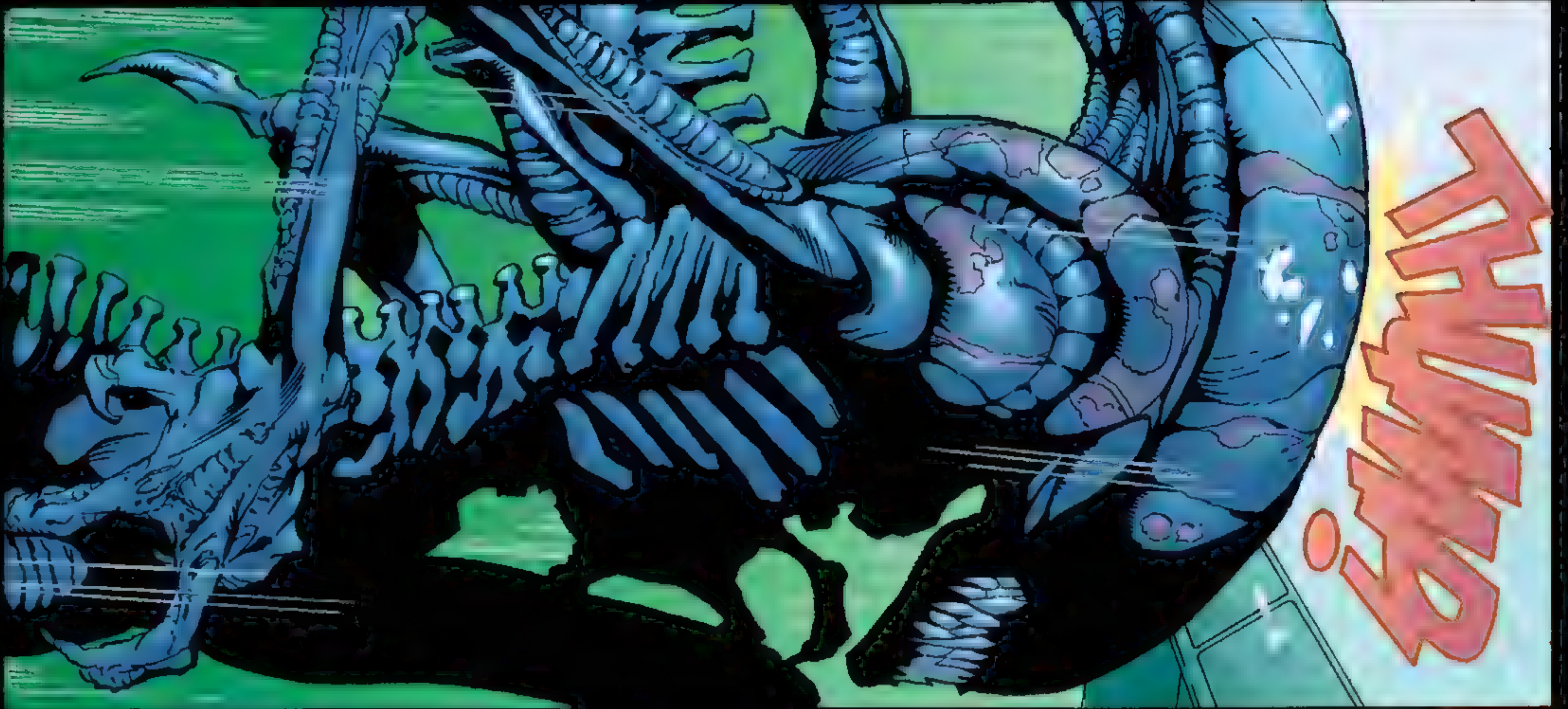
I'M
ON **HOLD**.
FORD'S IN A
MEETING.

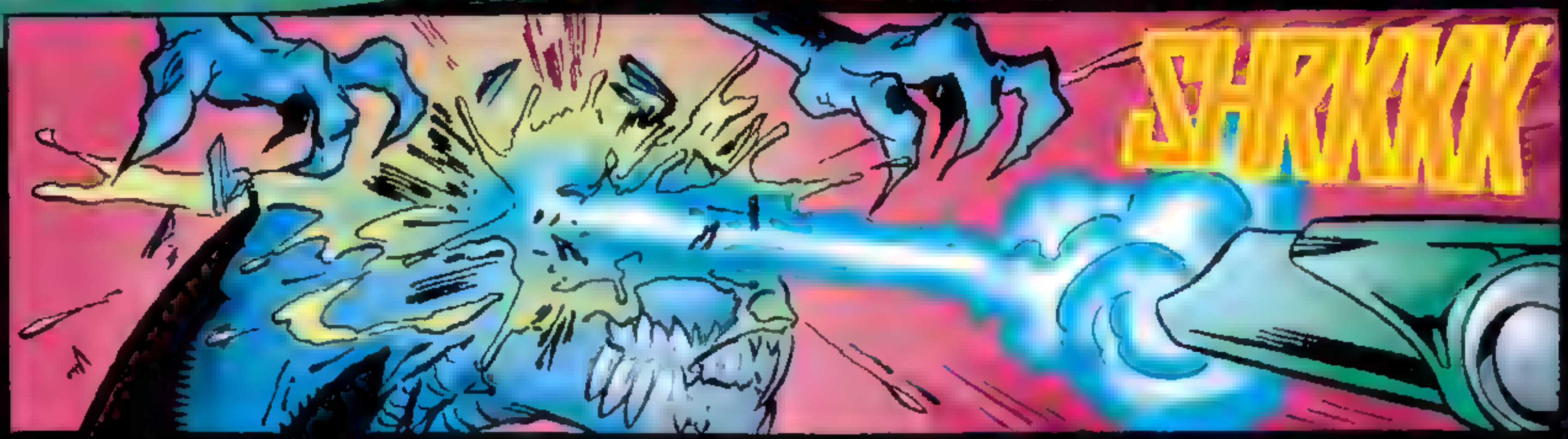
WHAT'S THE
MATTER?



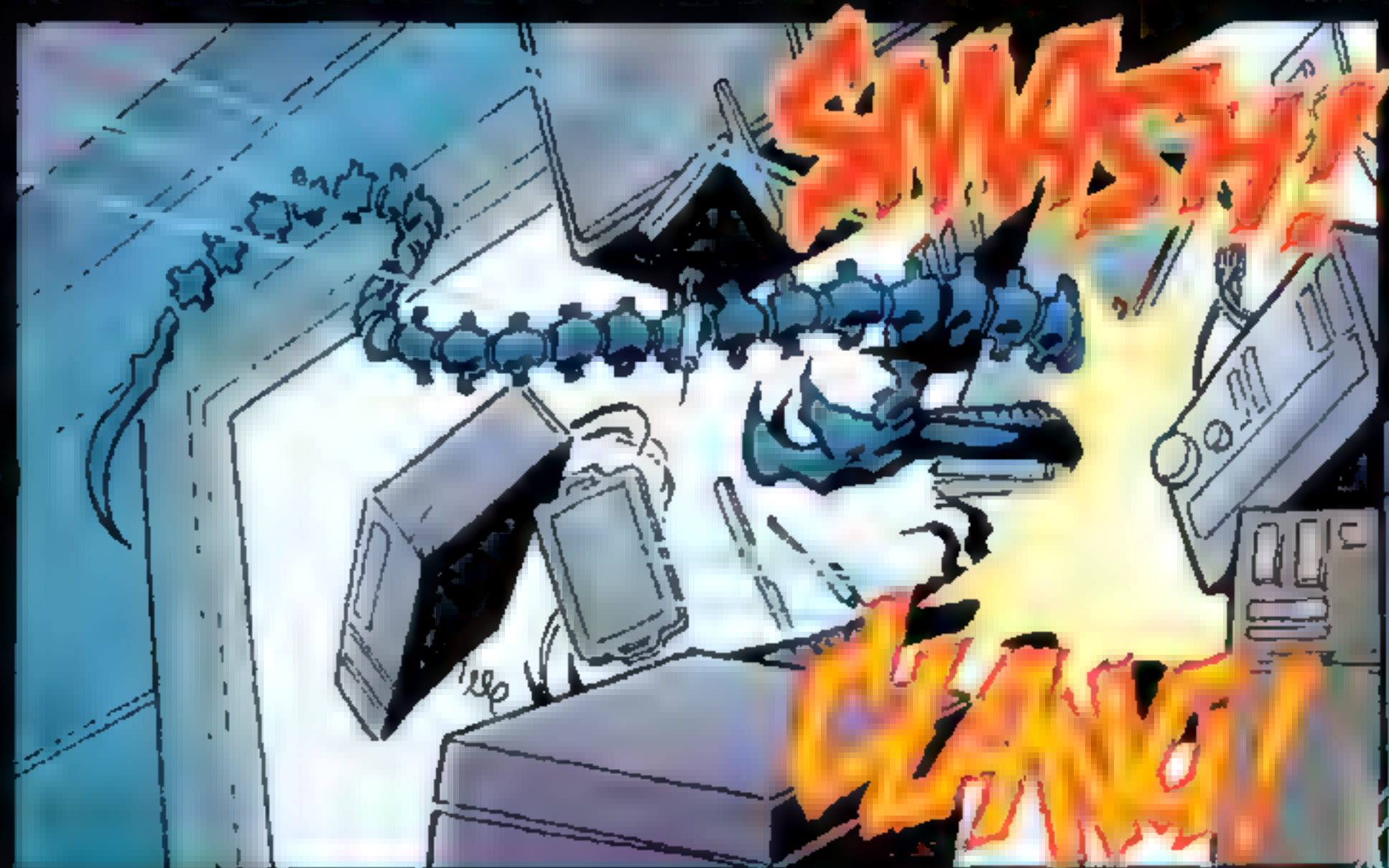




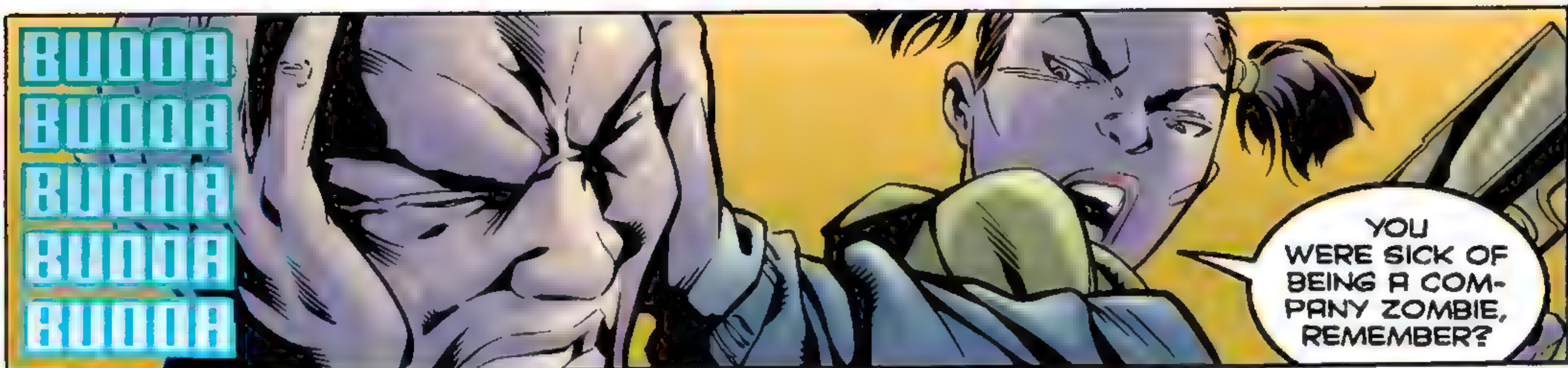
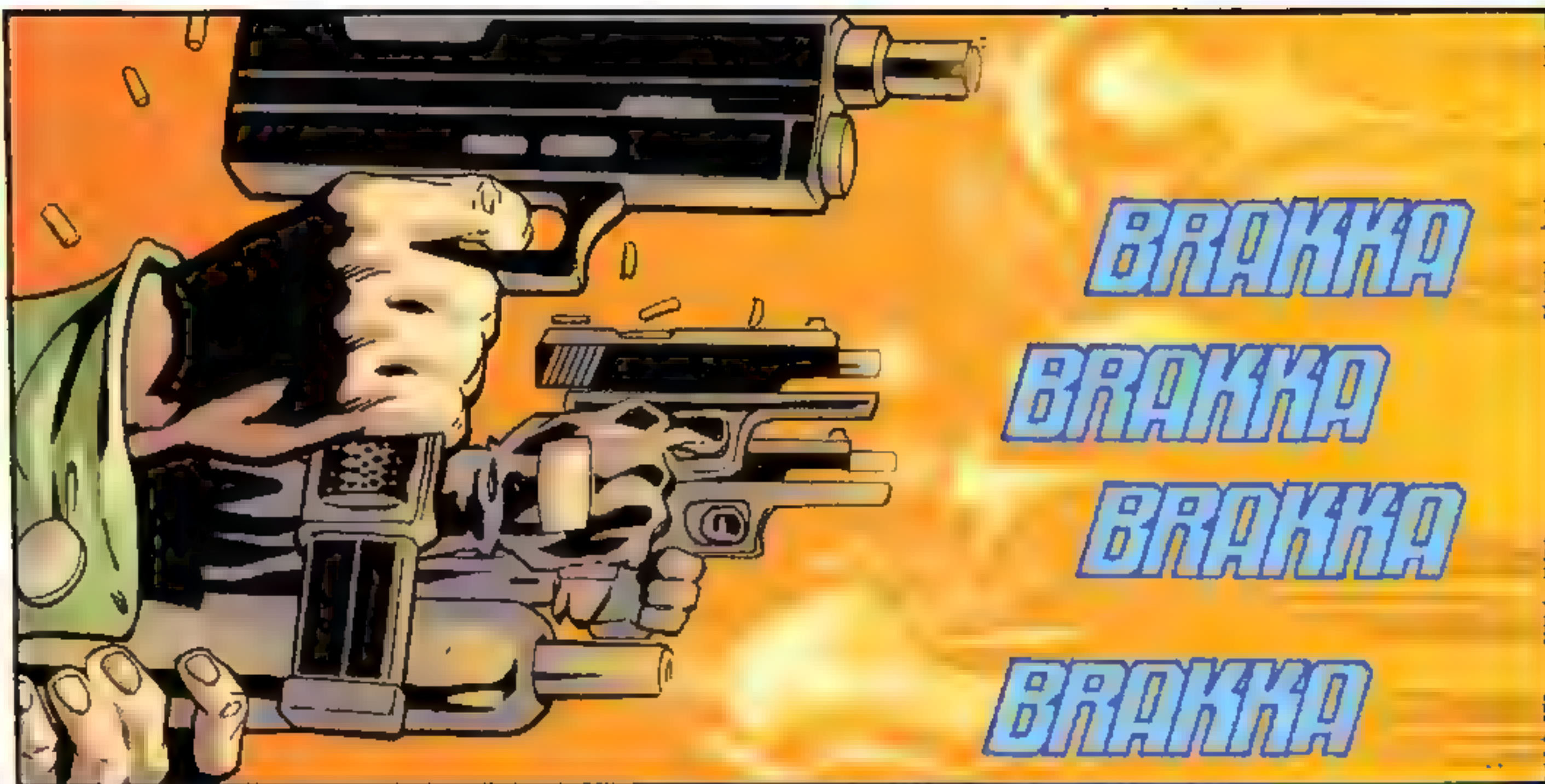
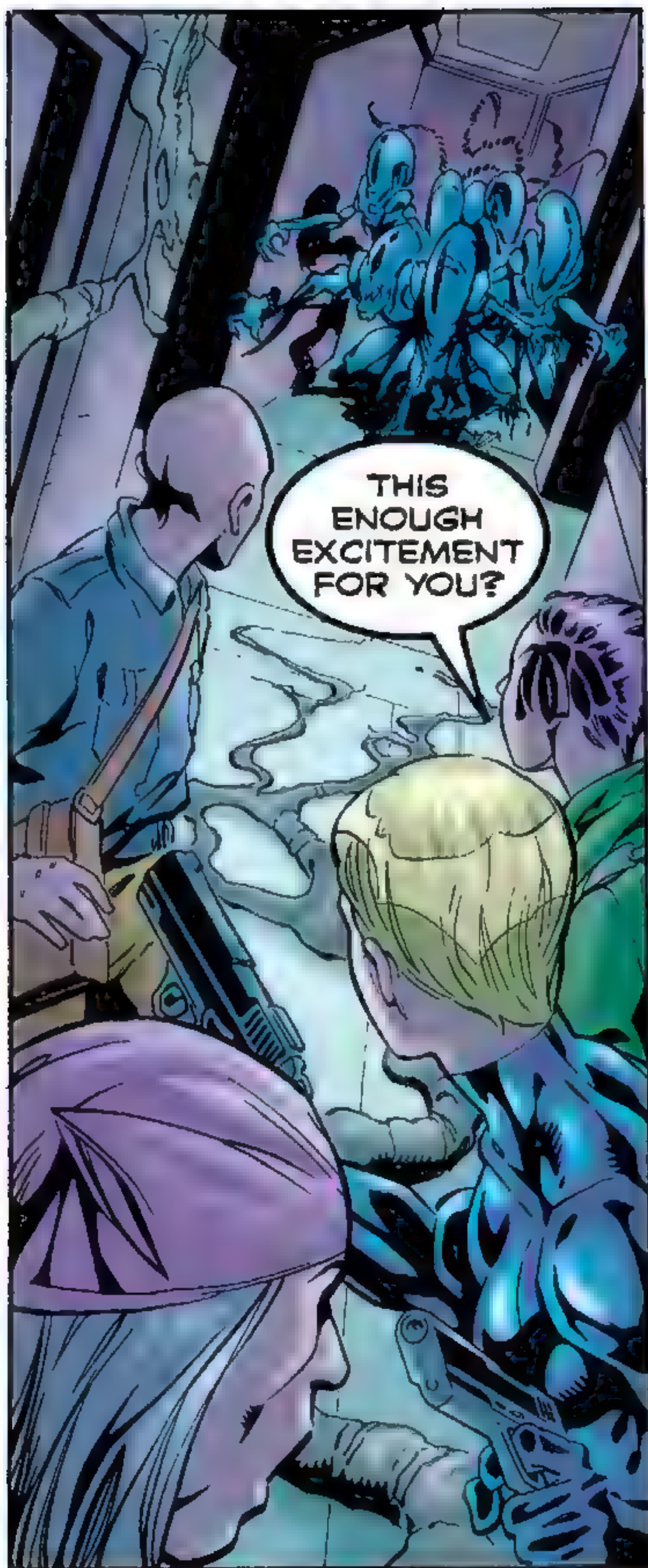








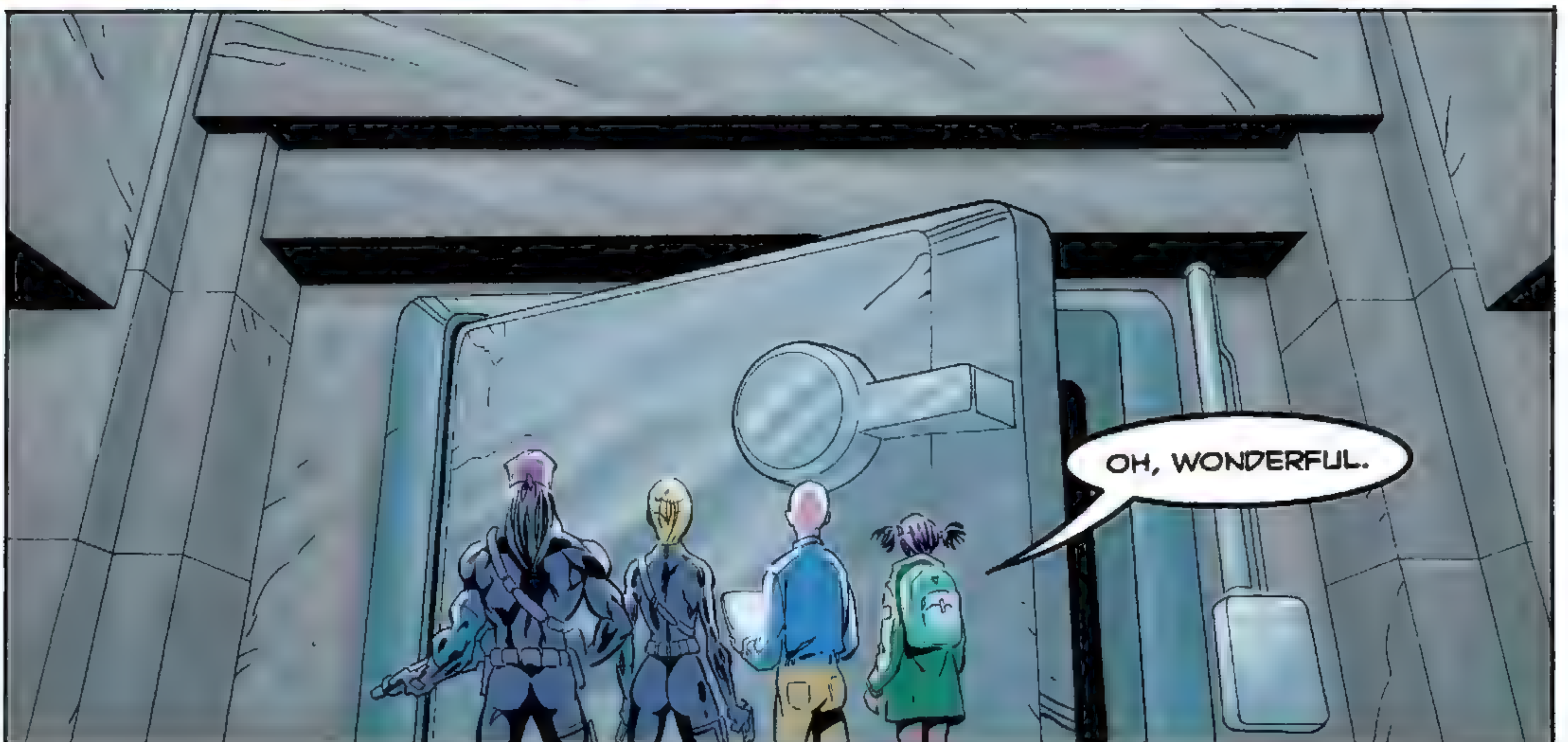








COURSE I'M SURE. SECTION 23, THERE'S A SAFE. HERE'S WHERE I CAN PROVE I'M NOT DEAD WEIGHT. I CRACK THE CODE AND TAKE WHATEVER IT IS THAT'S SO IMPORTANT TO FORD!

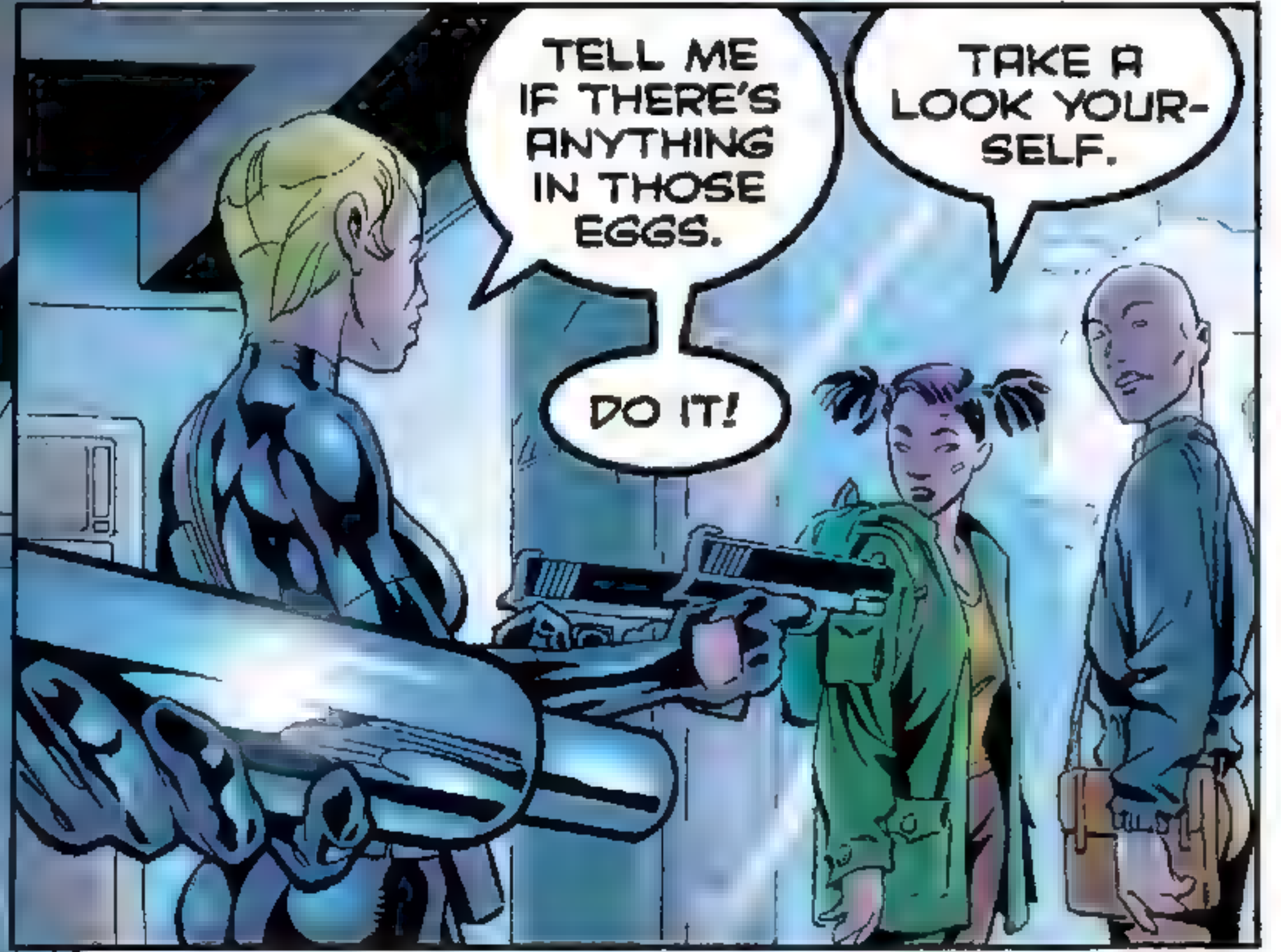




WELL...

...WHATEVER WE WERE SUPPOSED TO TAKE, IT'S GONE.

OH, MAN. I WAS DYING TO USE THAT WICKED-LOOKING DE-ICER PROGRAM.



TELL ME IF THERE'S ANYTHING IN THOSE EGGS.

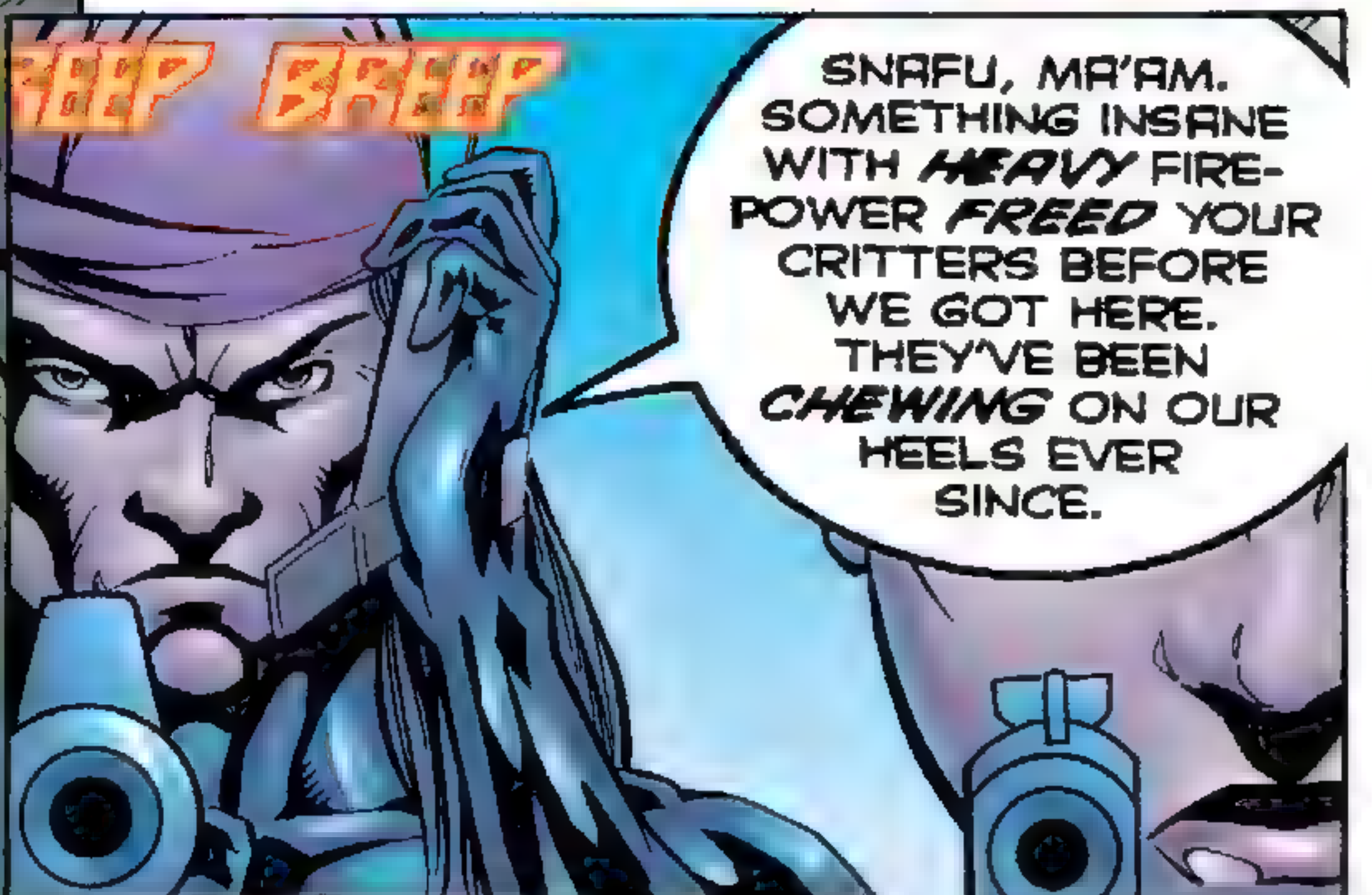
TAKE A LOOK YOURSELF.

DO IT!



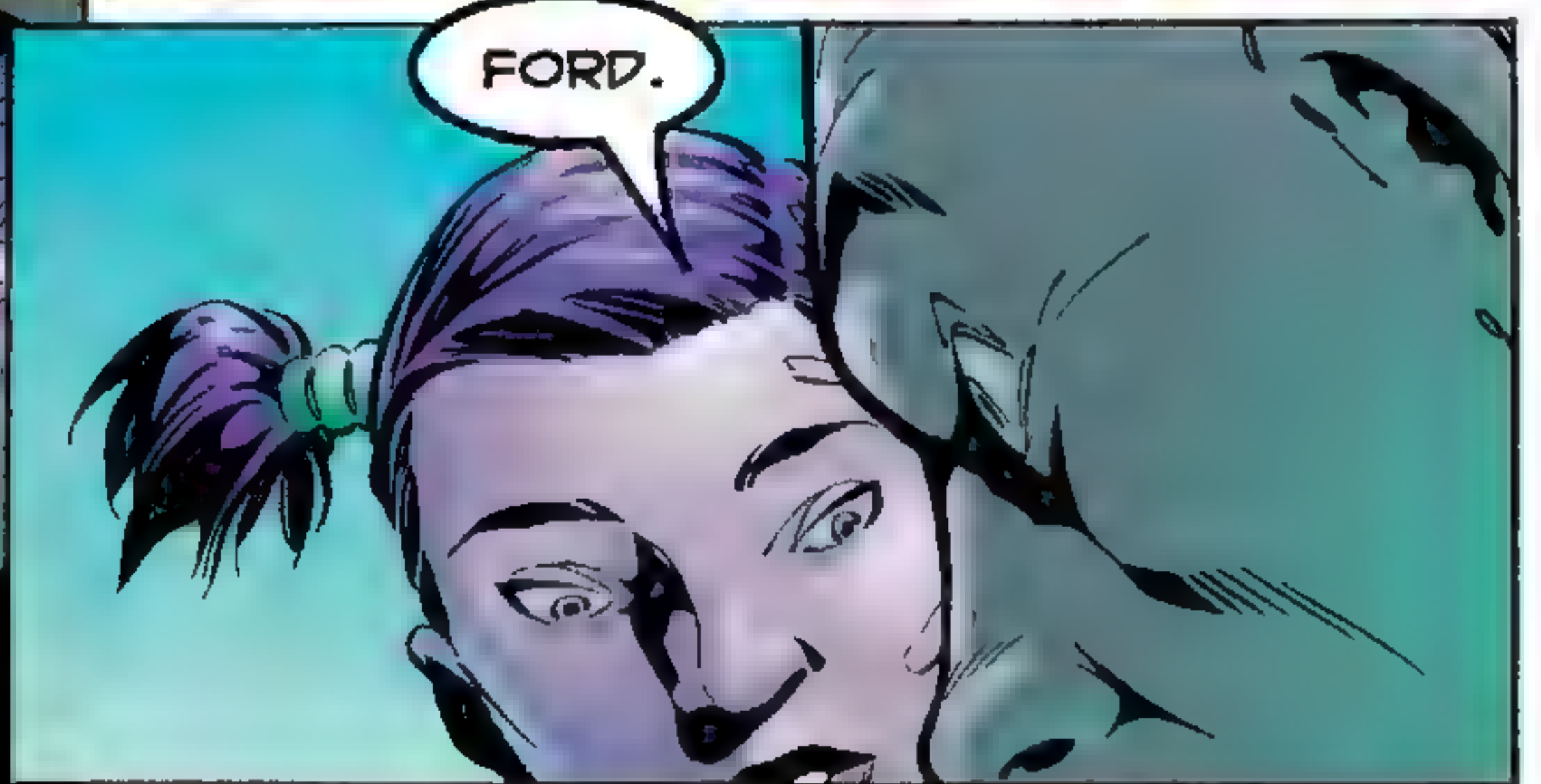
NOTHING. LUCKY FOR ME, EH?

BEEP BEEP



BEEP BEEP

SNAFU, MA'AM. SOMETHING INSANE WITH *HEAVY* FIRE-POWER *FREED* YOUR CRITTERS BEFORE WE GOT HERE. THEY'VE BEEN *CHEWING* ON OUR HEELS EVER SINCE.



FORD.



BUT, MA'AM, THAT WASN'T IN OUR CONTRACT. YES... NO...



PLAN B. THERE'S NO PHYSICAL SPECIMEN... SO OTAKU HERE WILL **DOWNLOAD** ALL THE RESEARCH FILES ON OUR MAN-EATING FRIENDS. THEN WE GET THE **CODES**, AND THEN WE GET OUT.

SHE DIDN'T EVEN **ASK** ABOUT PEARCE?



THAT'S WHAT WE WERE S'POSED TO STEAL? HOW EXACTLY DID YOU INTEND TO TAKE IT OUT WITH YOU?

YOU WERE GOING TO CARRY IT.



THERE'S WAY TOO MUCH **DATA** FOR MY LOUSY LAPTOP MEMORY. WE'LL HAVE TO FIND **DISKS** OR A **HARD DRIVE** TO DOWNLOAD THE INFO ONTO AND TAKE THAT WITH US.

HEADS UP.

WE HAVE **COMPANY!**





THIS WAY!

WHERE'S THE NEAREST COMPUTER LAB?

BRRRT!
BRRRT!

BRRRT!
BRRRT!

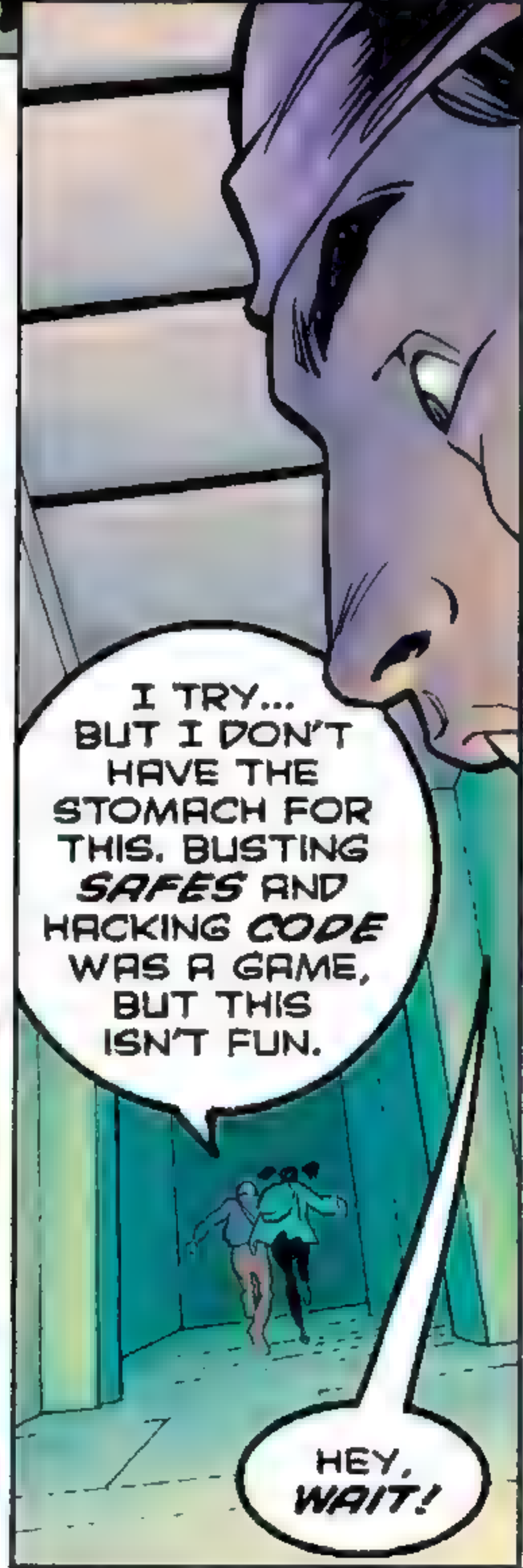


WHO CARES? I HAVE *ALL* THE FILES ON LAP-TOP.

BUT YOU SAID--

A DISTRACTION TO GET AWAY FROM THOSE *PSYCHOS*. DIDN'T YOU SEE? THEY WERE GONNA *SHOOT* US BACK THERE. AND THEY'LL PROBABLY *WHACK* US AS SOON AS THEY HAVE COPIES OF THE FILES.

YOU'RE NOT AS DUMB AS YOU LOOK.



I TRY... BUT I DON'T HAVE THE STOMACH FOR THIS. BUSTING *SAFES* AND HACKING *CODE* WAS A GAME, BUT THIS ISN'T FUN.

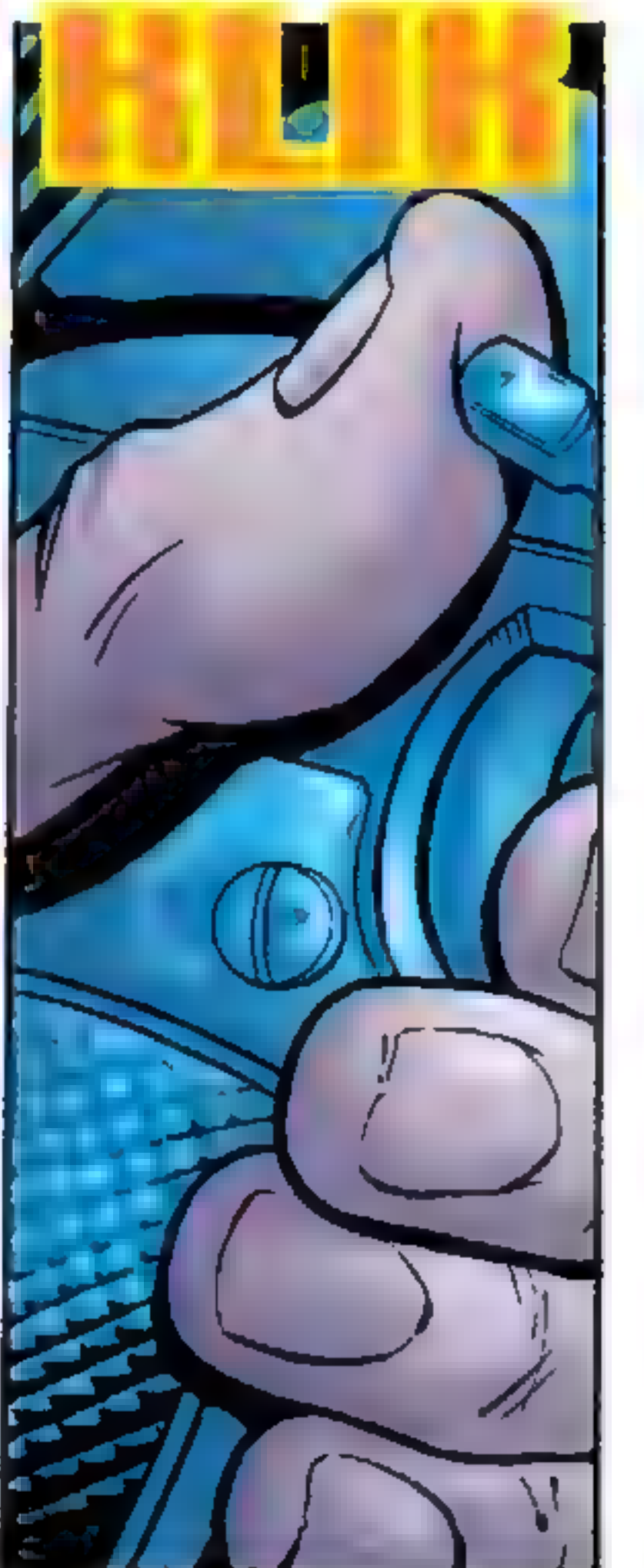
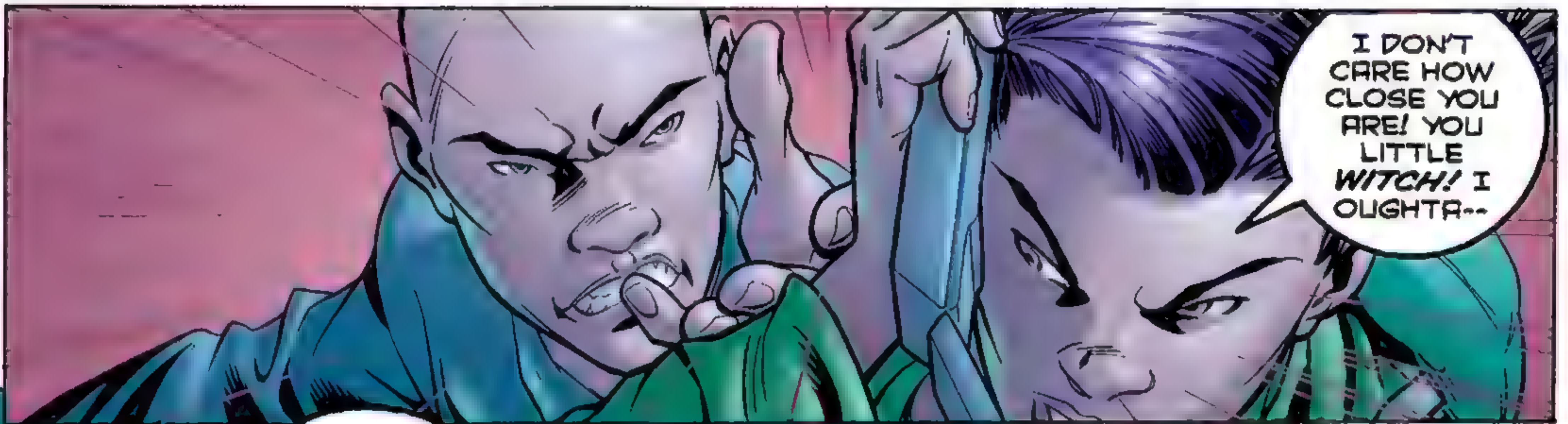
HEY, WAIT!



HURRY. CALL FORD FOR THE EXIT CODES.

GIMME FORD!

IT'S *PRIVATE*. I NEED TO SPEAK TO HER ABOUT IT!







22. 82
148. 22 675
207 6





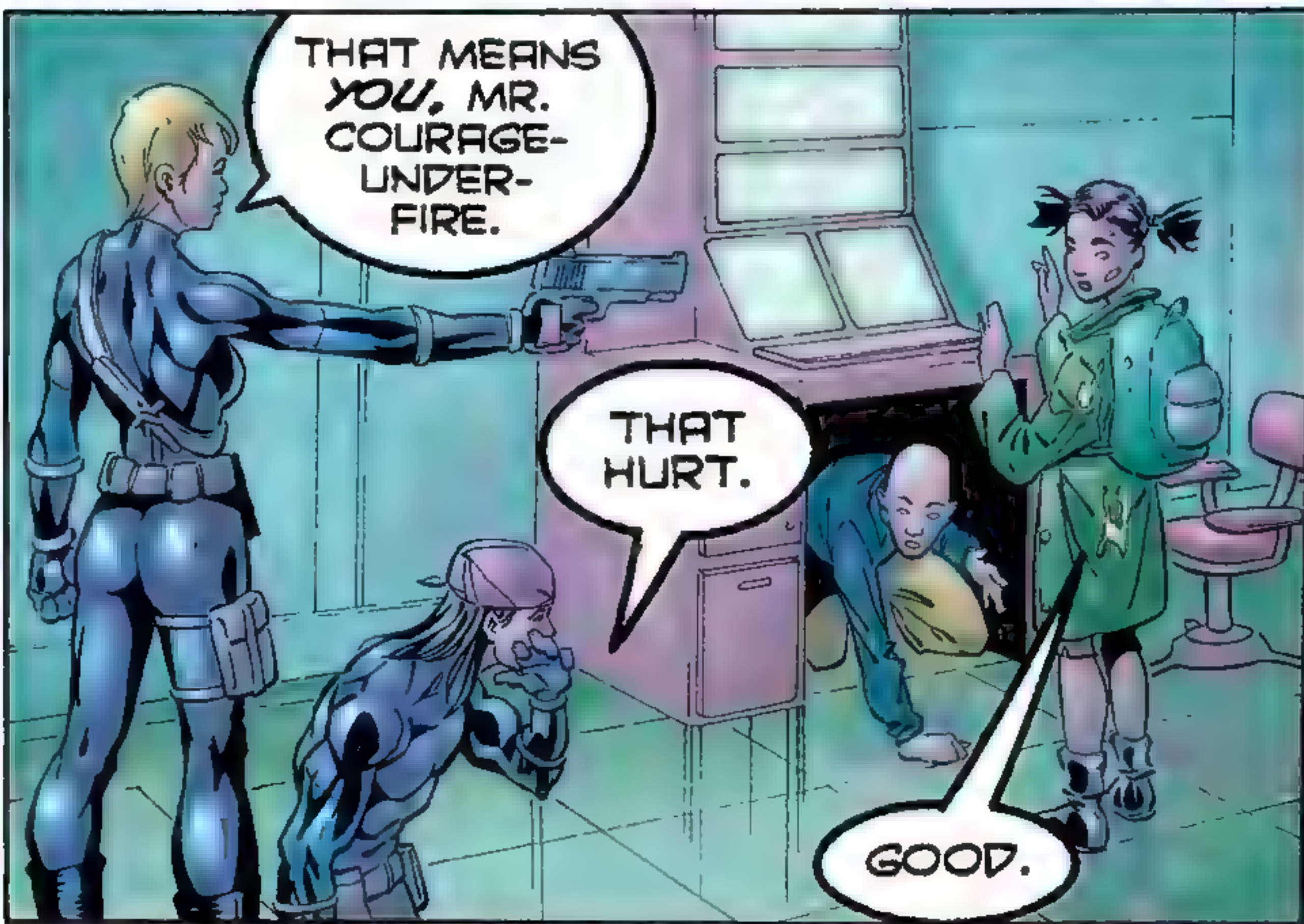
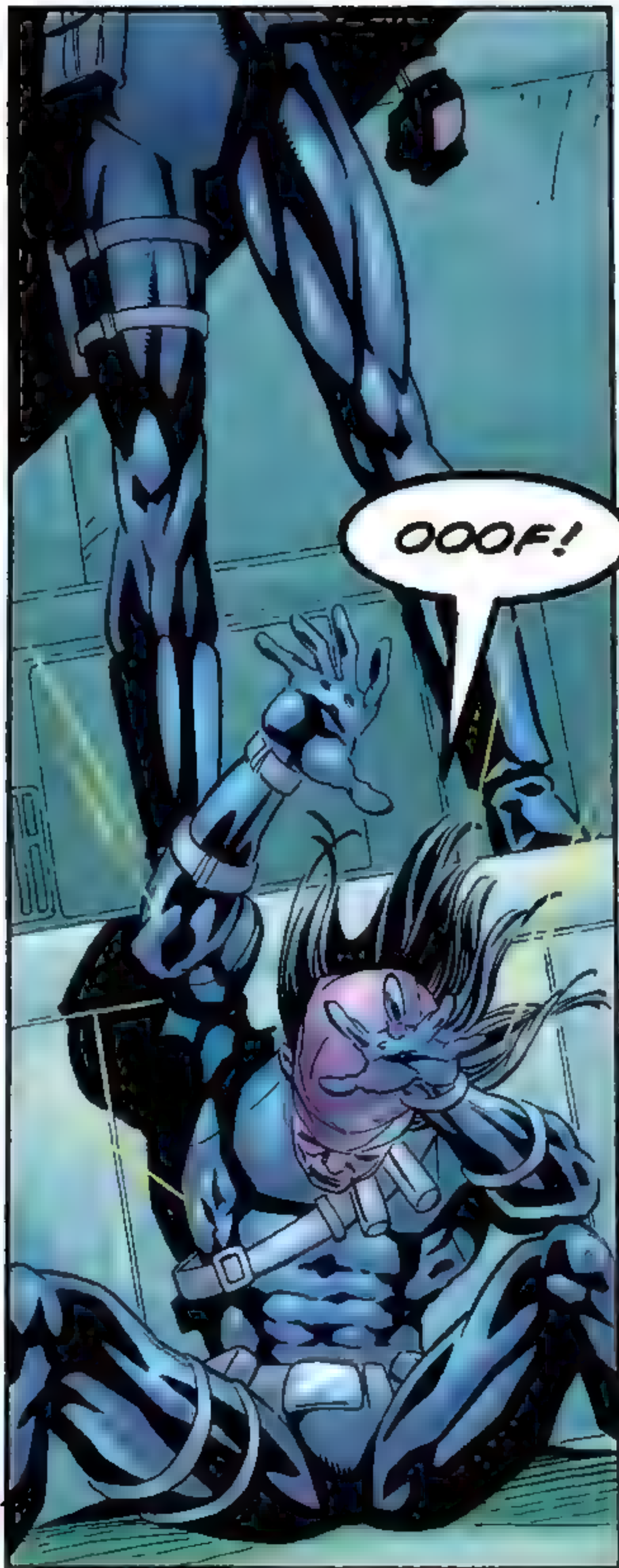


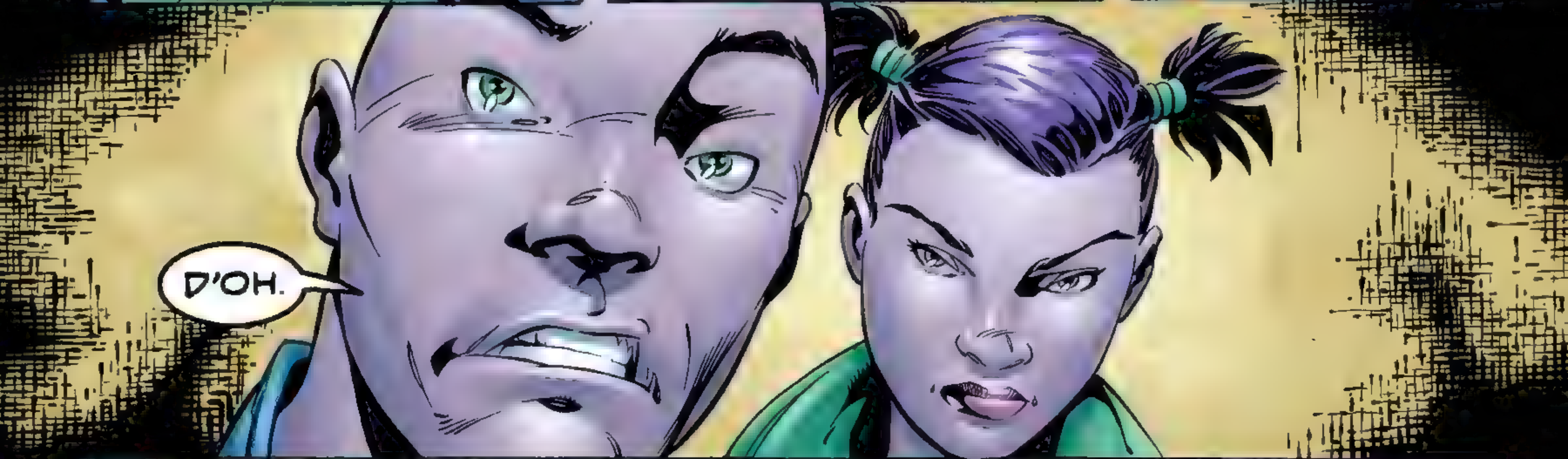
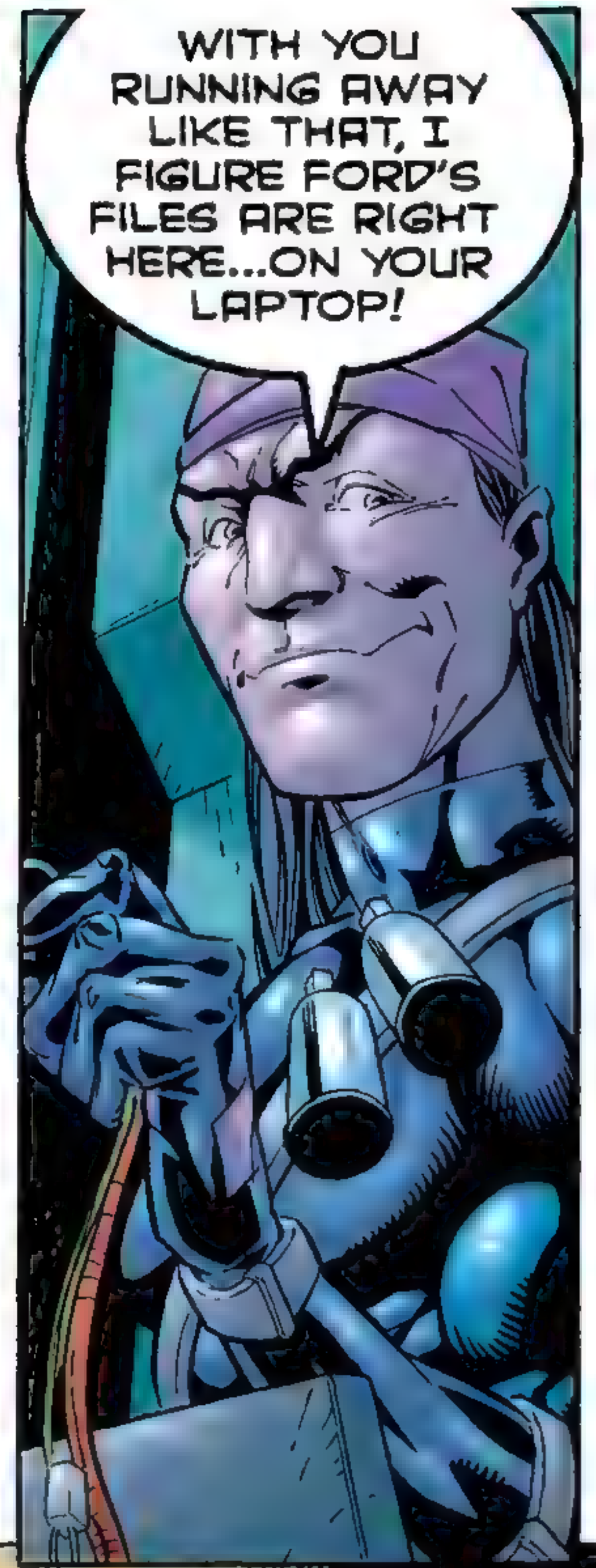
GOING
SOME-
WHERE?







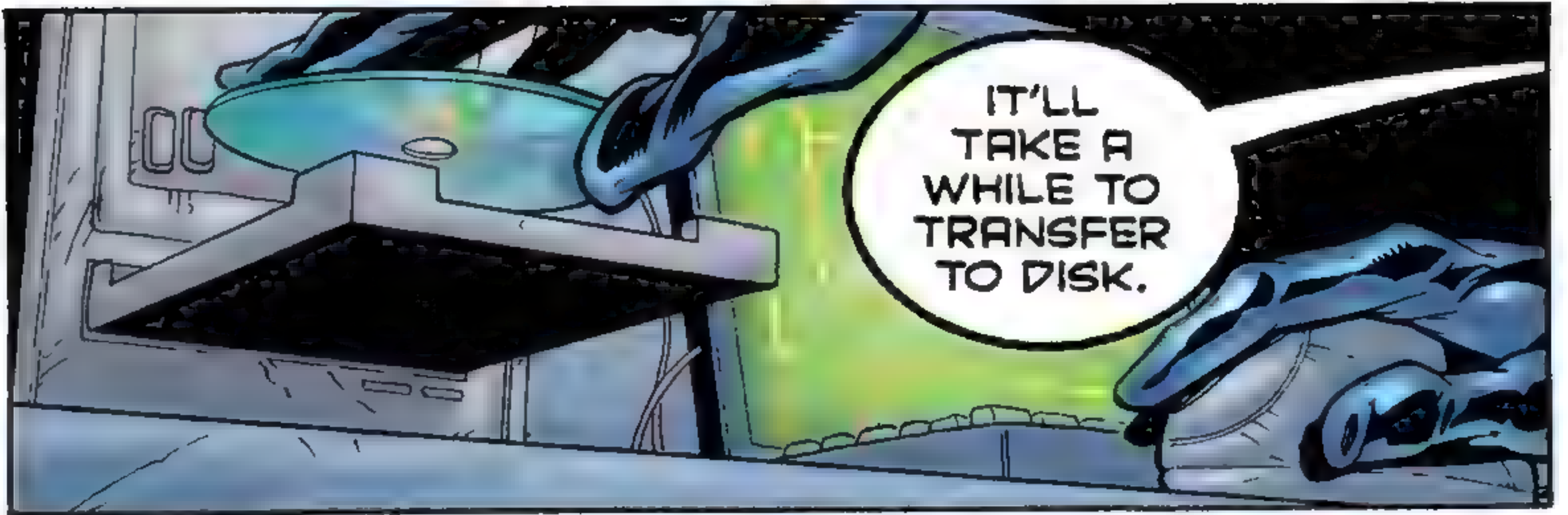




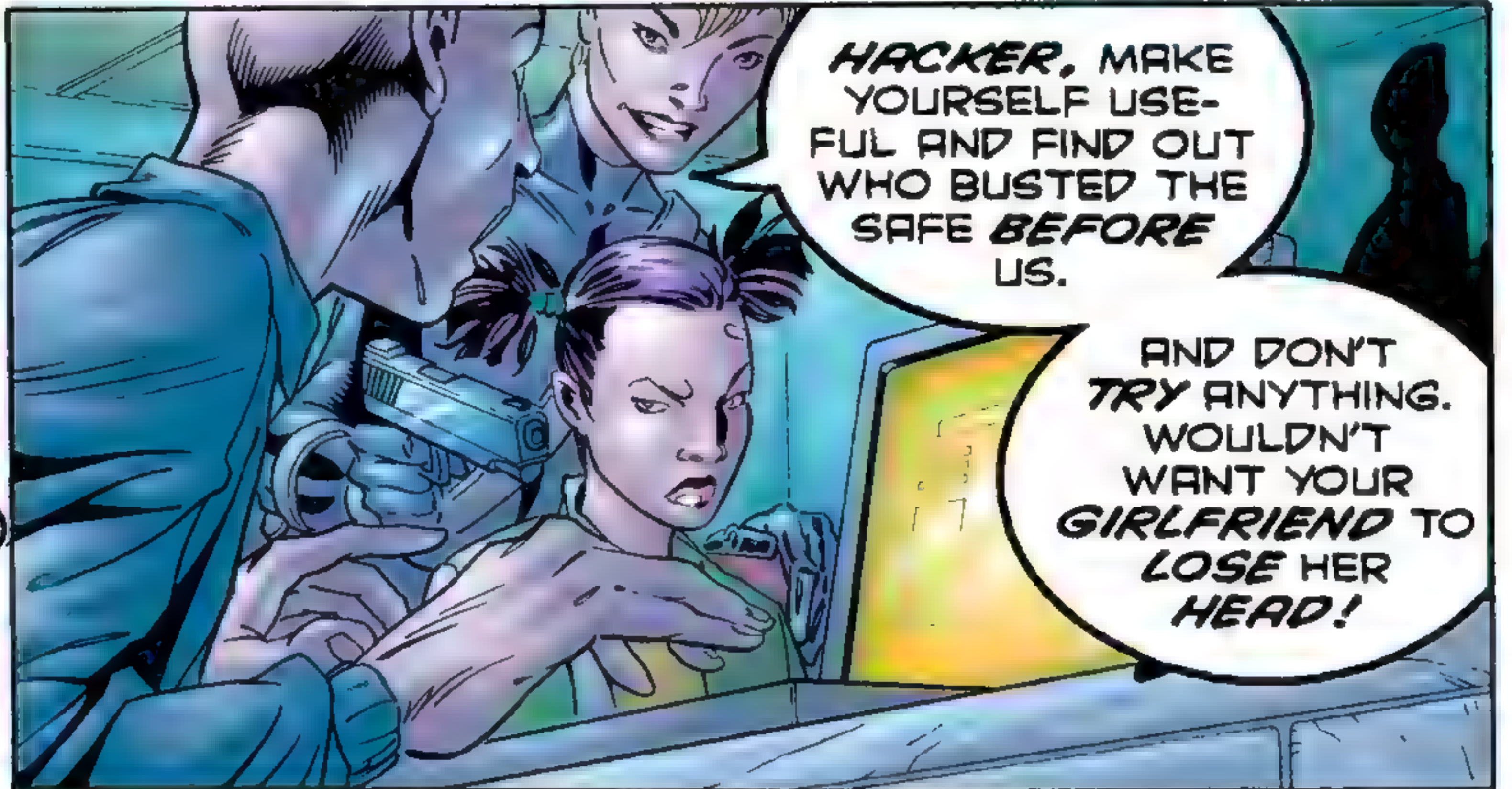


BACK UP
THE FILES,
TOO...JUST
IN CASE.

GRRR!



IT'LL
TAKE A
WHILE TO
TRANSFER
TO DISK.

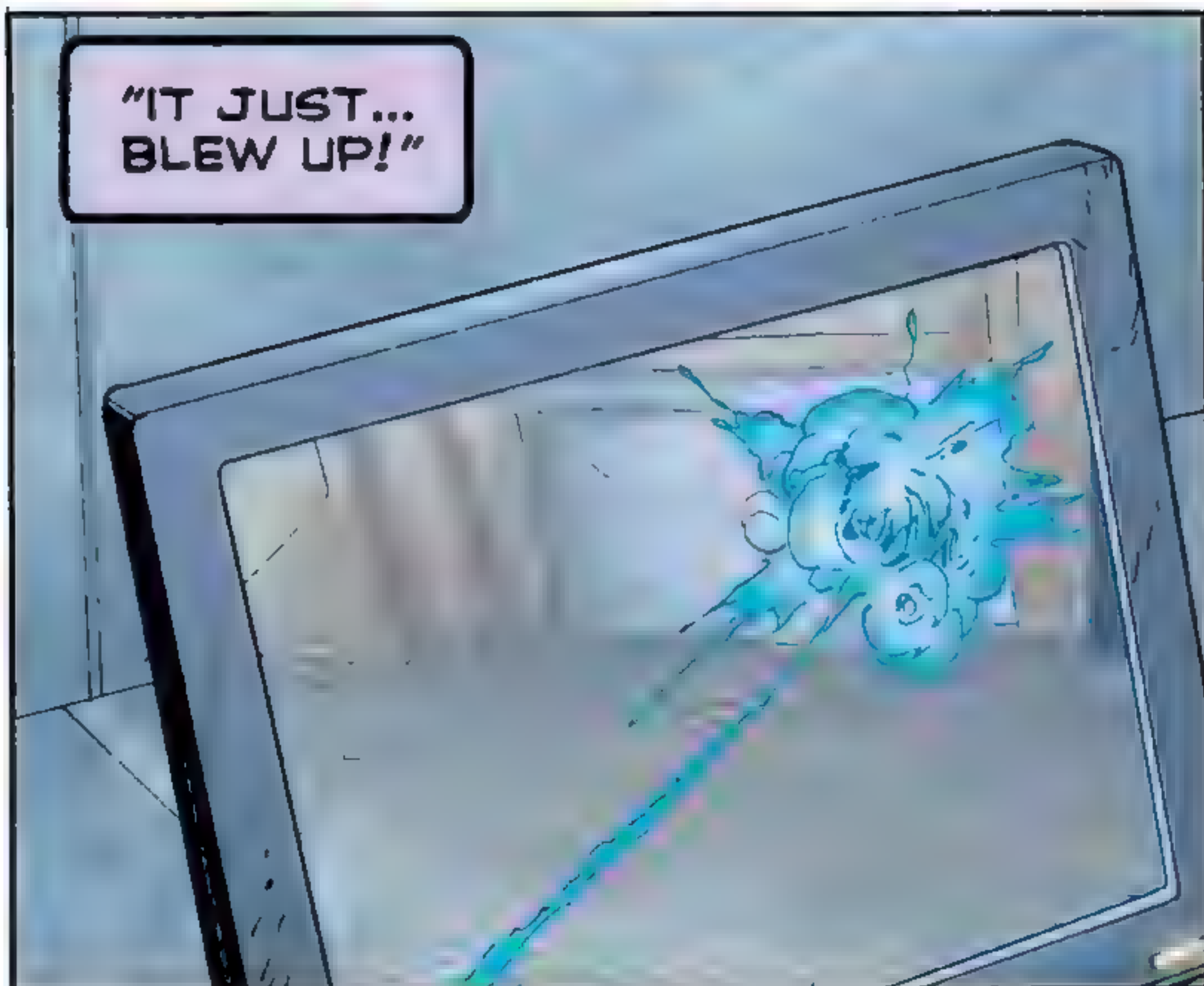


HACKER, MAKE
YOURSELF USE-
FUL AND FIND OUT
WHO BUSTED THE
SAFE *BEFORE*
US.

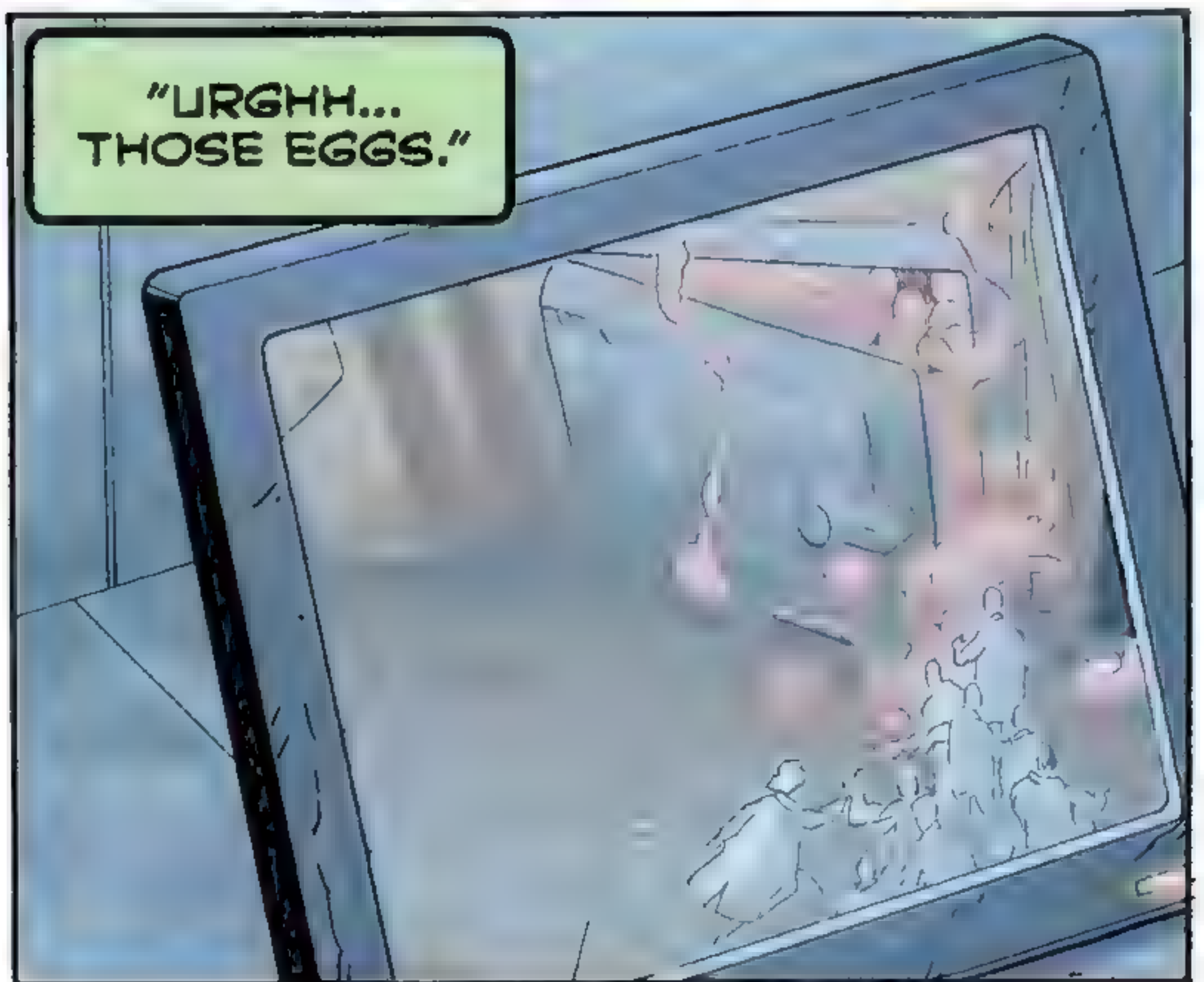
AND DON'T
TRY ANYTHING.
WOULDN'T
WANT YOUR
GIRLFRIEND TO
LOSE HER
HEAD!



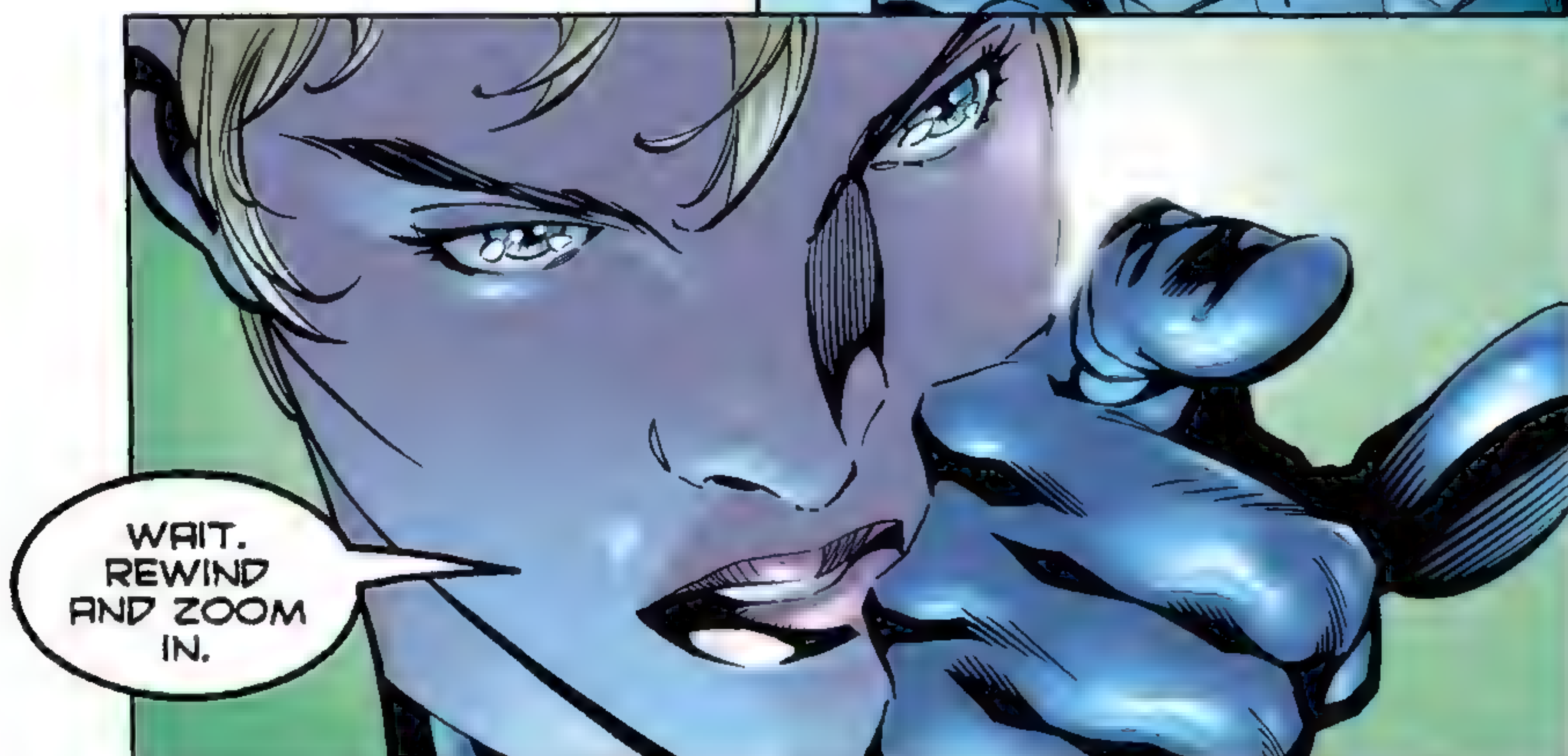
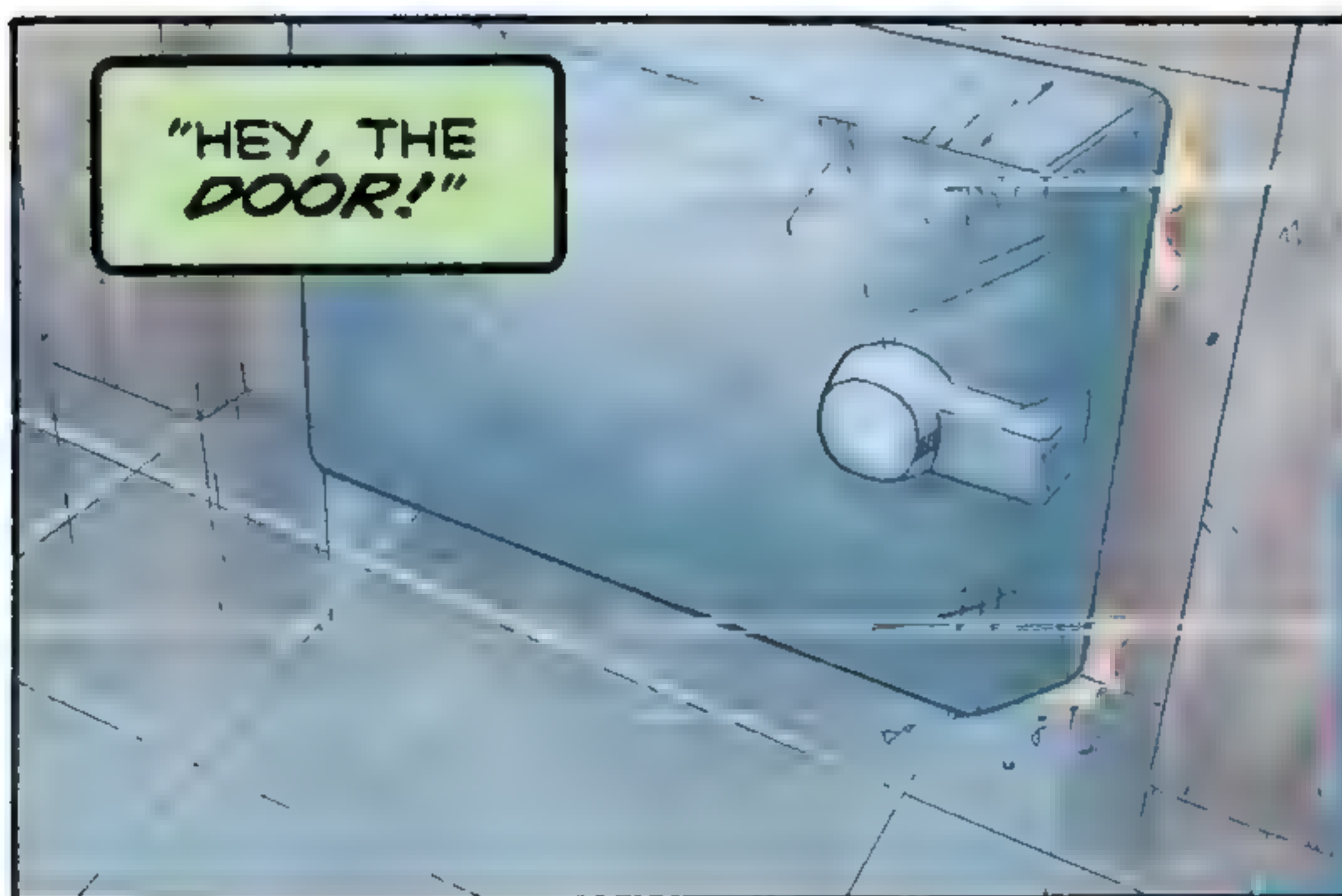
LOOK! SECURITY
TAPES FROM A
COUPLA DAYS
AGO!

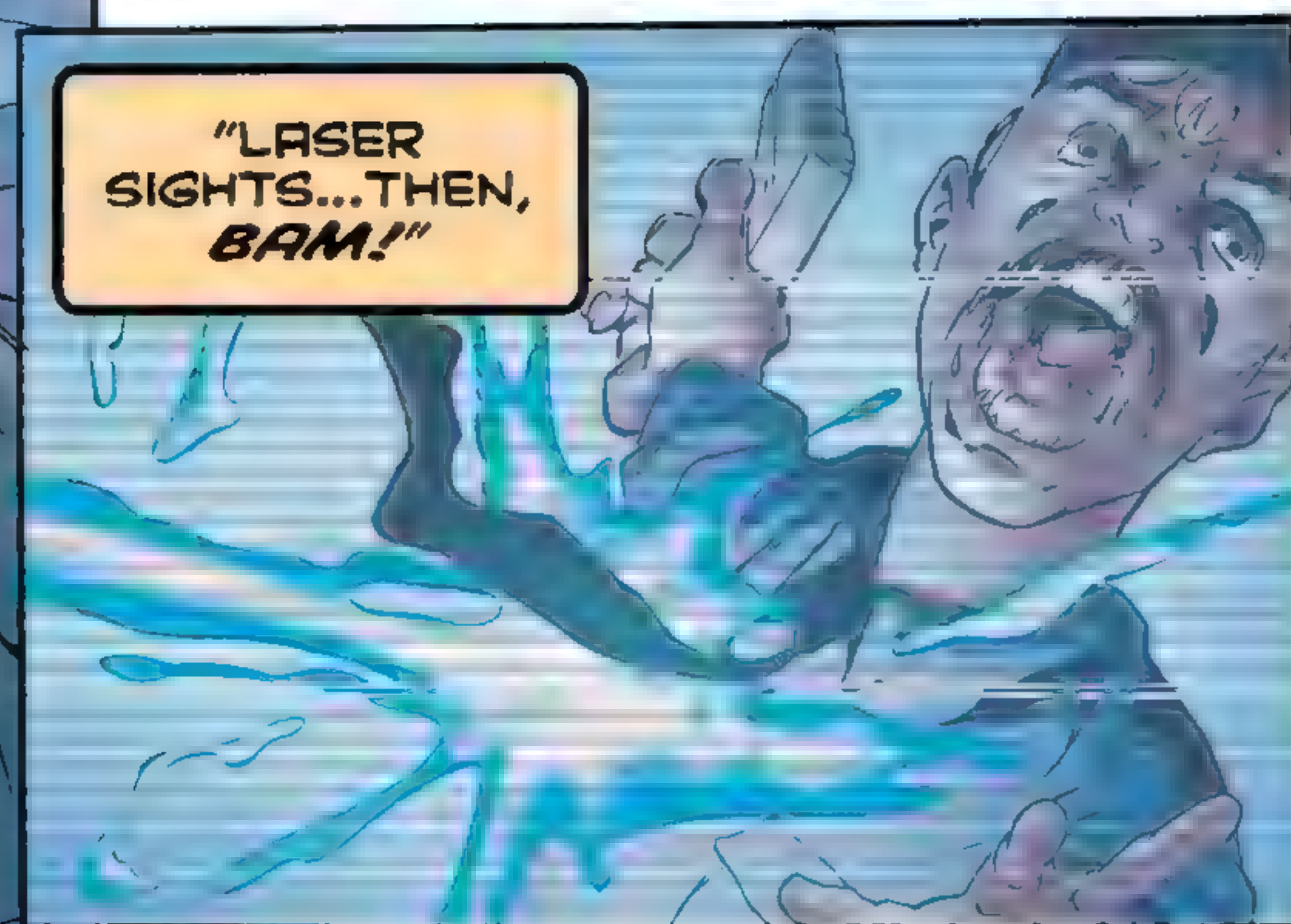


"IT JUST...
BLEW UP!"



"URGHH...
THOSE EGGS."







YOU SEE ANY BIOTECH LOGOS AROUND? THIS IS A SECRET RESEARCH FACILITY! IT'S BLOWN UP IN THEIR FACES, SO THEY'VE DISOWNED ALL KNOWLEDGE OF THE PLACE!



THEY'RE WORRIED THE GOVERNMENT WILL FIND OUT... RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF BIO-WEAPONS IS ILLEGAL, Y'KNOW.

WHAT ARE THEY DOING?



IMPREGNATING THEM WITH THE BIOMECHANOIDS... THE *ALIENS*.



YOU READ THE FILES, I SEE.

WHAT KIND OF MONSTER WOULD WANT TO LET THOSE THINGS FREE?



IT'S NOT HUMAN.

WHAT?



BACK WHEN I WAS IN THE FORCES, THIS GUY, *OSTERMANN*,* HE USED TO TELL US STORIES.

HERE WE GO...

*SEE PREDATOR: XENOGENESIS.

"TY OSTERMANN,
A CAREER SOLDIER.
ALL THIS TIME I
THOUGHT HE WAS FULL
OF IT... GUY CLAIMED
HE COULD PLAY THE
CELLO."

DON'T
TELL ME,
HILLYER! THE
BRASS WANT US
TO HOLD OUR
GROUND?!

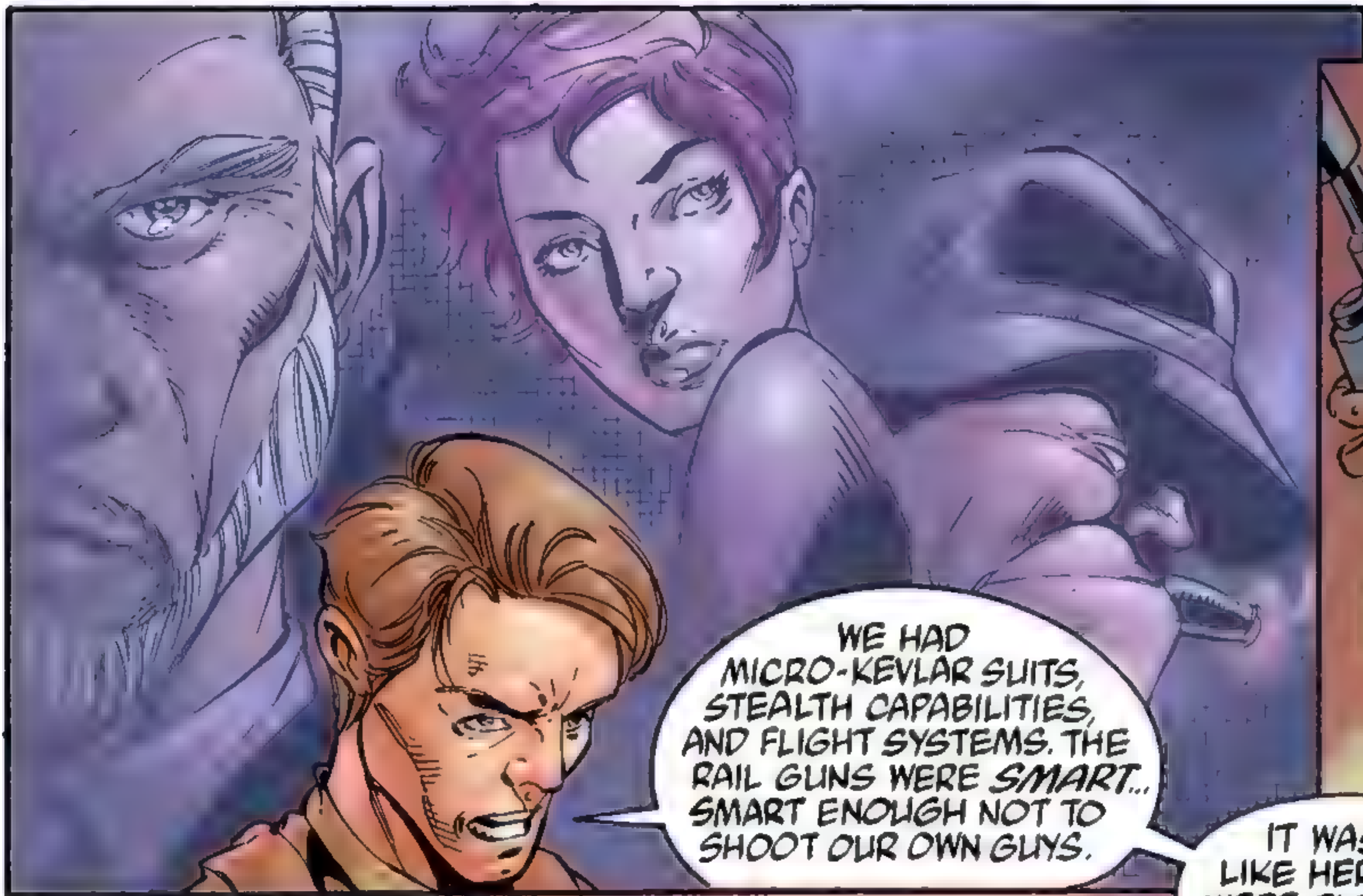
'FRID
SO, TY!

WHOEVER
INVENTED THE
PHRASE "FRIENDLY
FIRE" SHOULD
BE SHOT!

I EVER
TELL YOU
GUYS ABOUT
**SPEAR-
HEAD?**

WE HAD
A ROOM FOR
TARGET PRACTICE,
AND WE'D SHOOT
ROBOTS WITH BRAND-
NEW, SHINY
GUNS.

DID
YOU LIVE
HAPPILY EVER
AFTER?



WE HAD
MICRO-KEVLAR SUITS,
STEALTH CAPABILITIES,
AND FLIGHT SYSTEMS. THE
RAIL GUNS WERE *SMART*...
SMART ENOUGH NOT TO
SHOOT OUR OWN GUYS.



IT WASN'T
LIKE HERE. WE
WERE FIGHTING...
MONSTERS...

...PREDATORS,
TRIBAL WARRIORS WHO
LIVE FOR THE HUNT, ARMED
WITH CLOAKING DEVICES,
WRIST BLADES, PLASMA
CASTERS, INCREDIBLE
SPEED AND STRENGTH!





"WE WERE FUNDED BY A SECRET GOVERNMENT PROGRAM RUN BY A GUY NAMED DANCER. HE PLAYED US LIKE PUPPETS."

"WE HAD ALL THE TOYS WE EVER WANTED, AND ALL WE WANTED TO DO WAS FIGHT."

"ME, SIENNA, JUDAS... R.I.P. EVEN MICRO-KEYLAR CAN'T STOP A PLASMA BOLT."

SO WHAT HAPPENED?

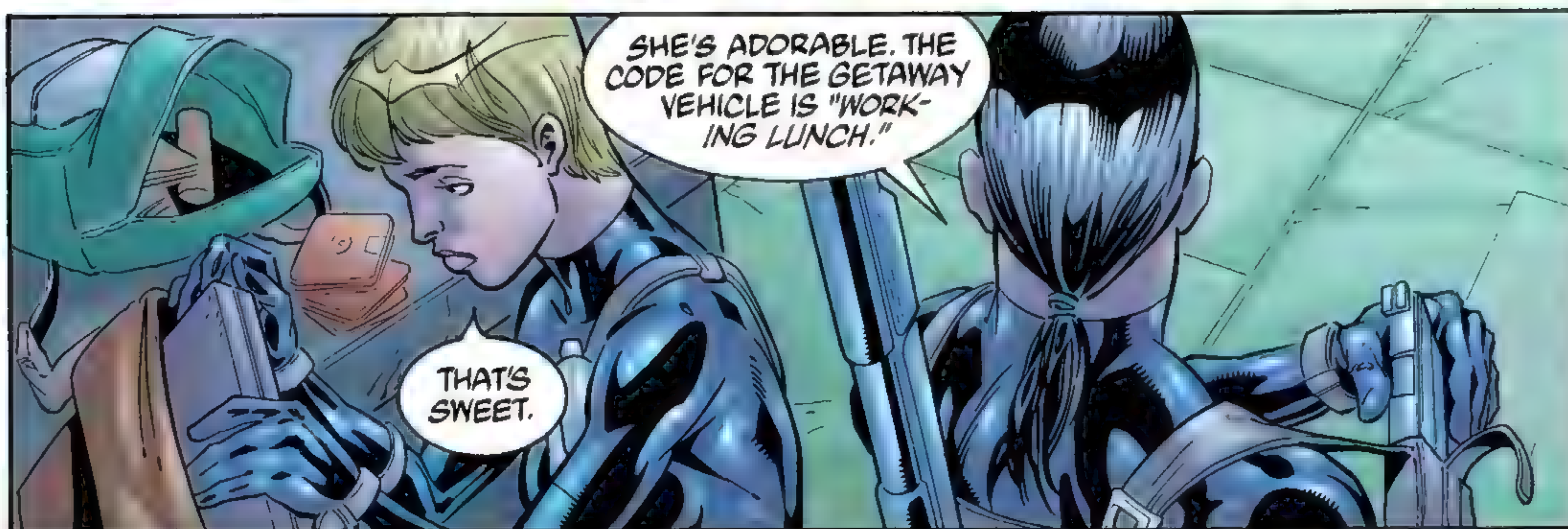
WE KICKED THEIR TAILS GOOD. TOO GOOD. THEY SAW US AS A CHALLENGE, AND THEN--

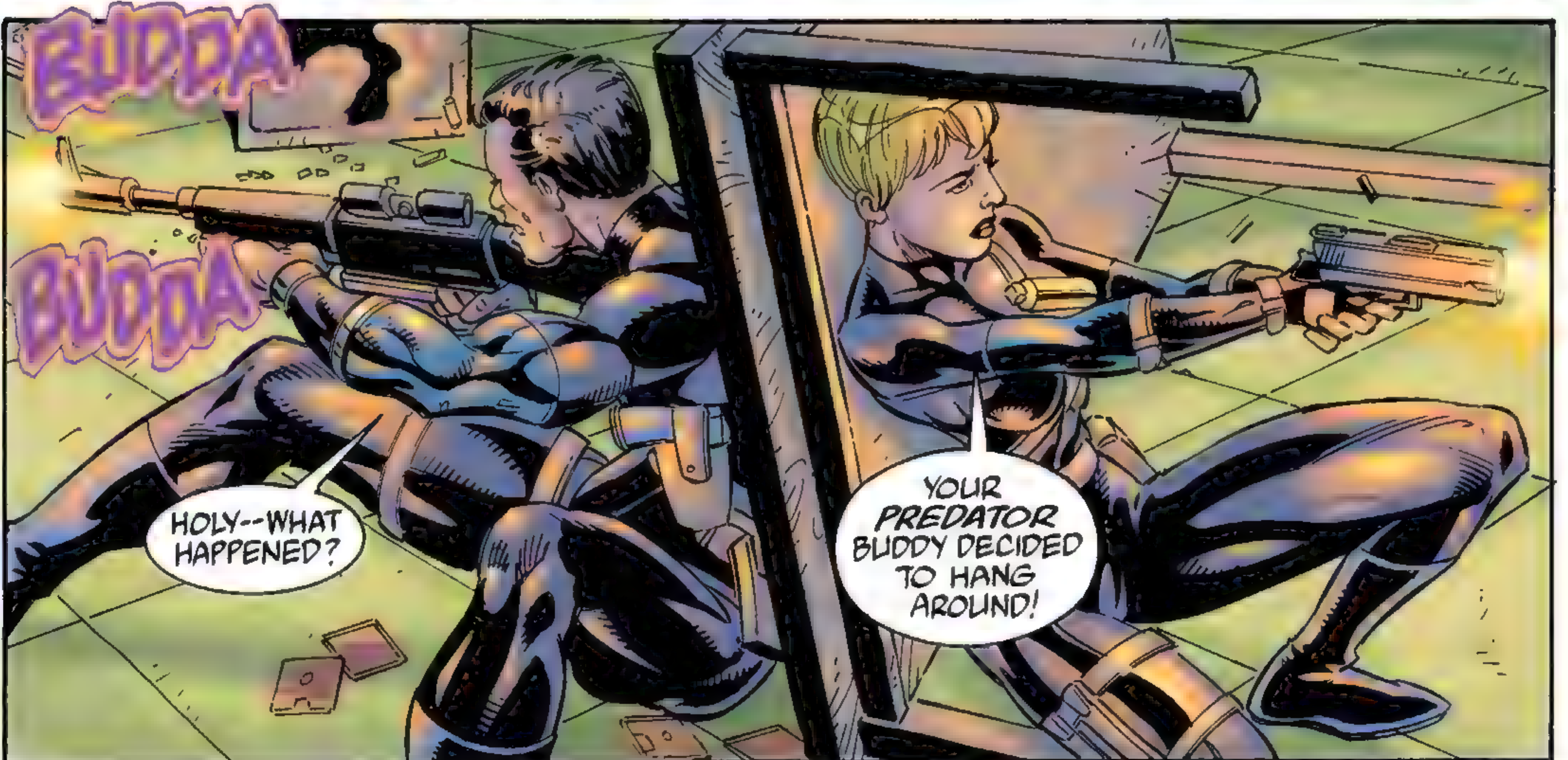
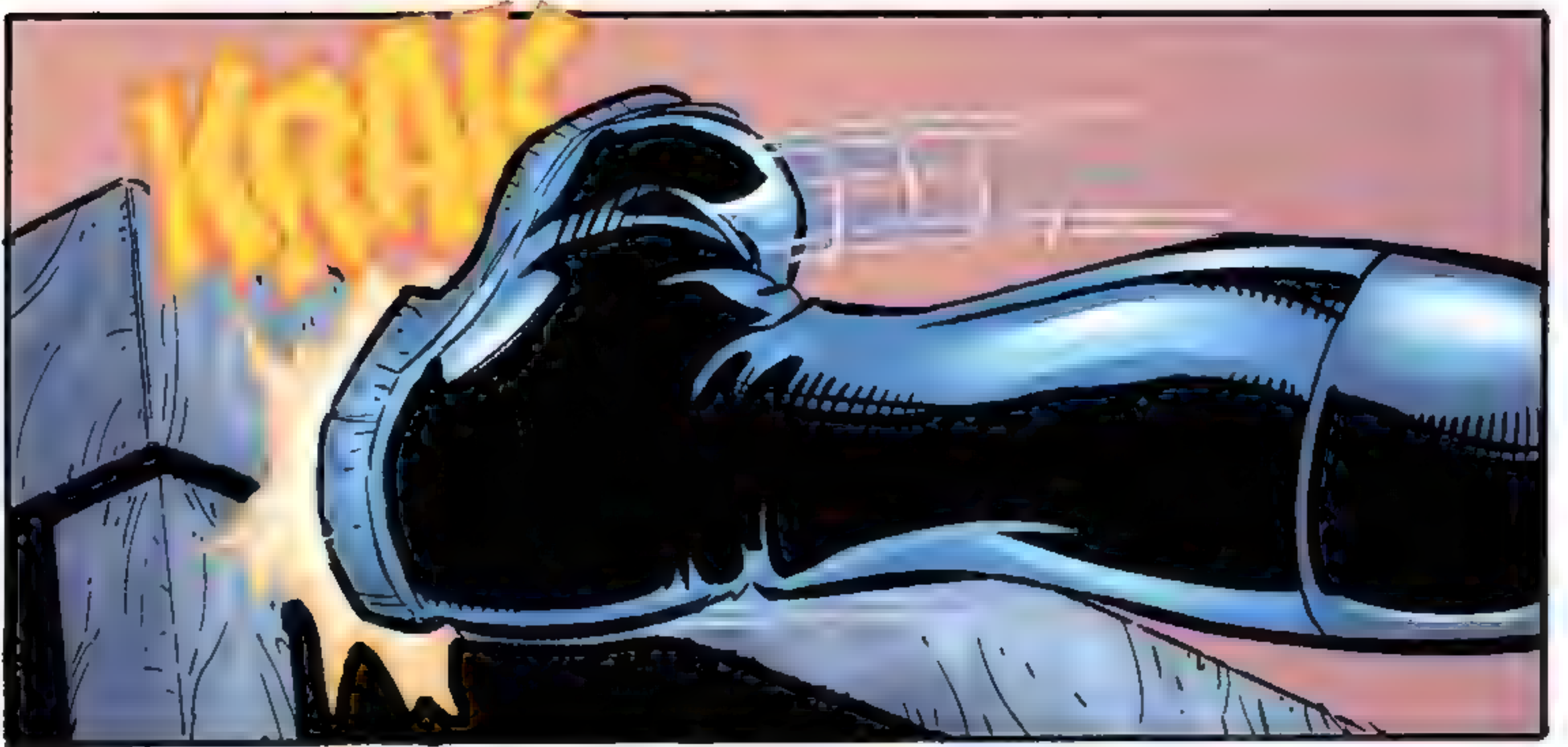
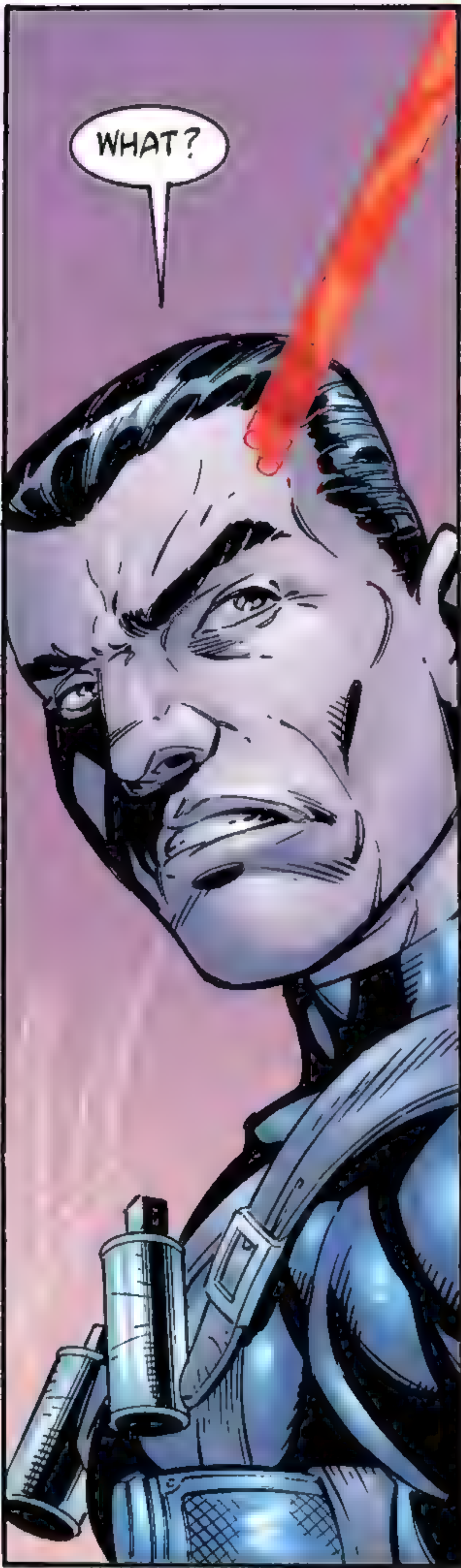
WHAT?

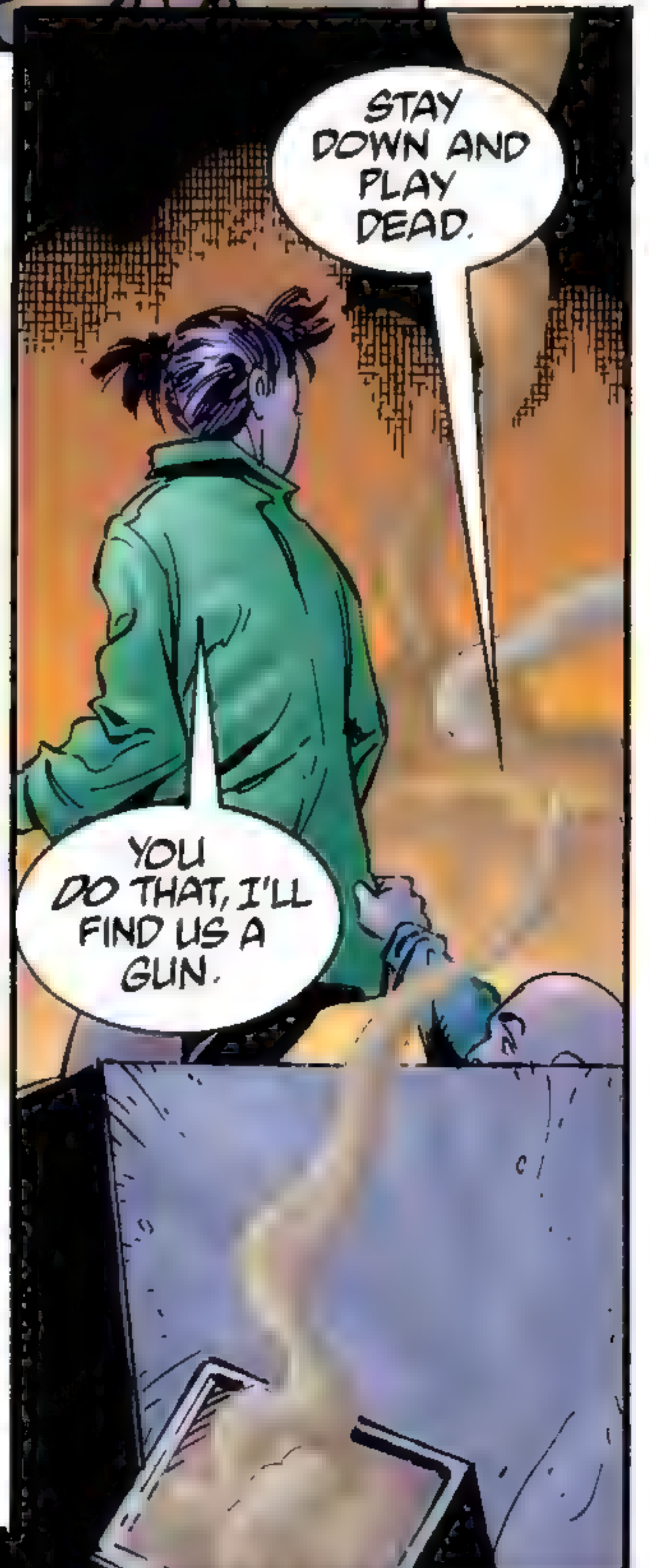
THE USUAL...

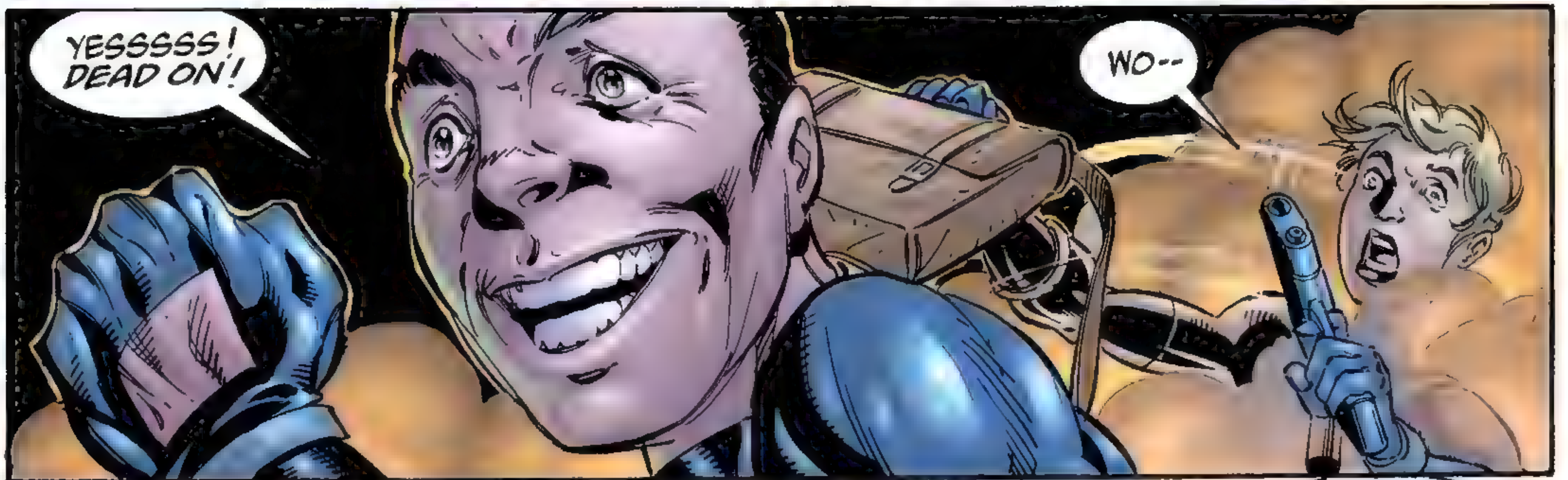
"...MANAGEMENT SCREWED IT UP."

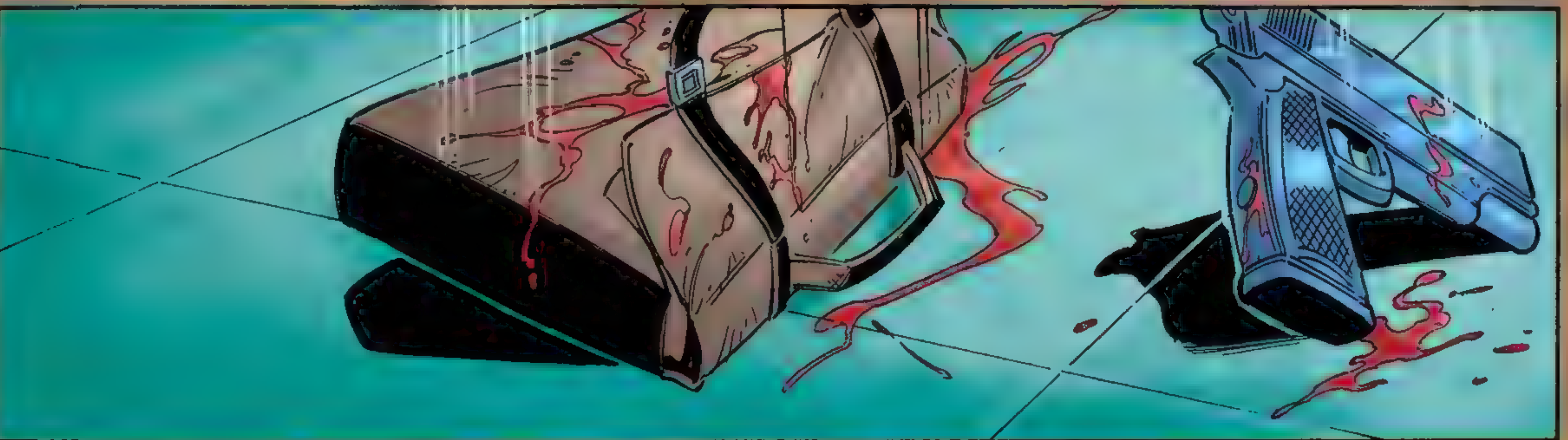
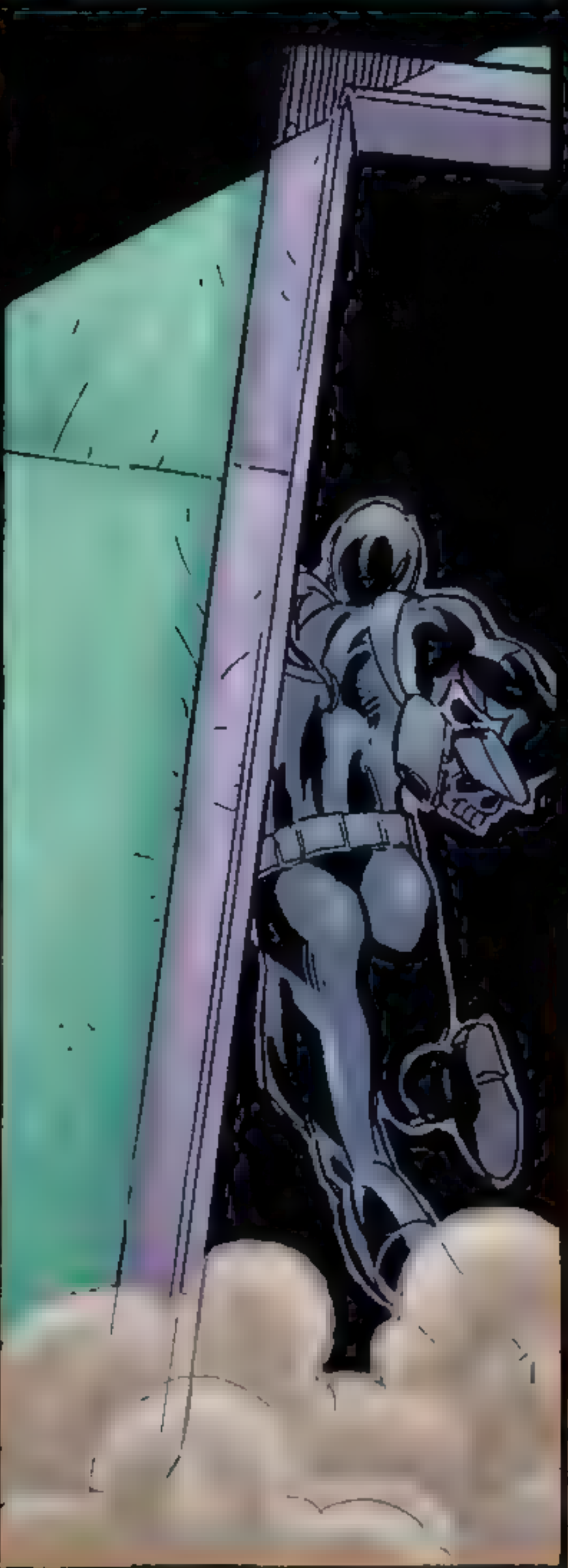
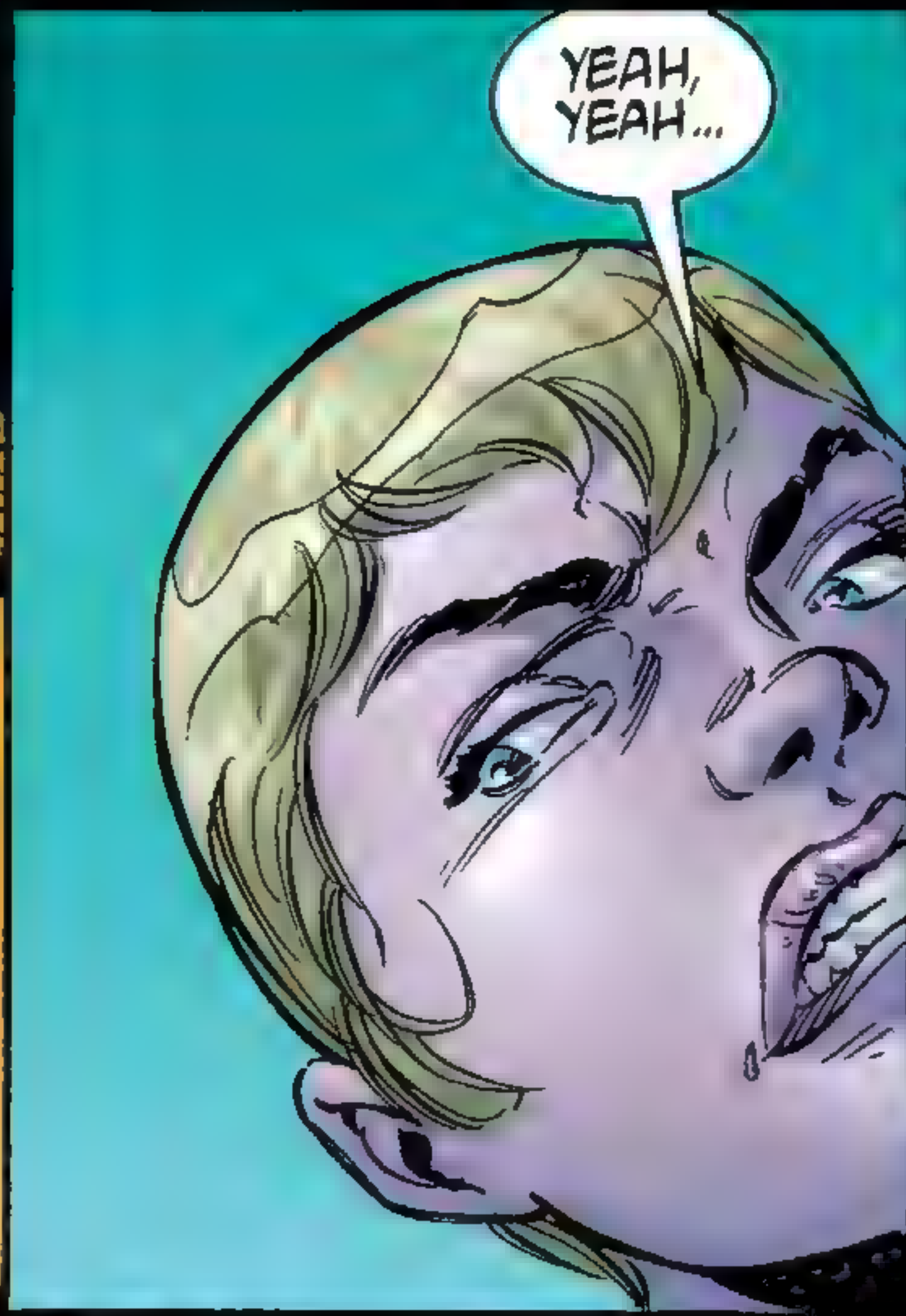
KOOM



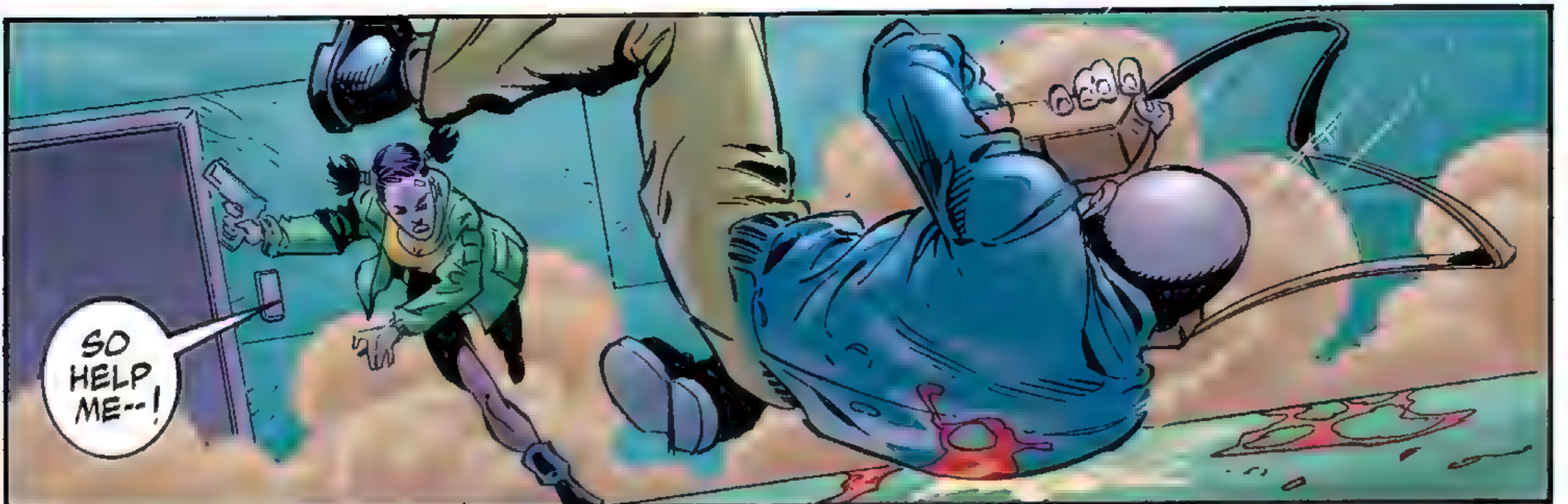
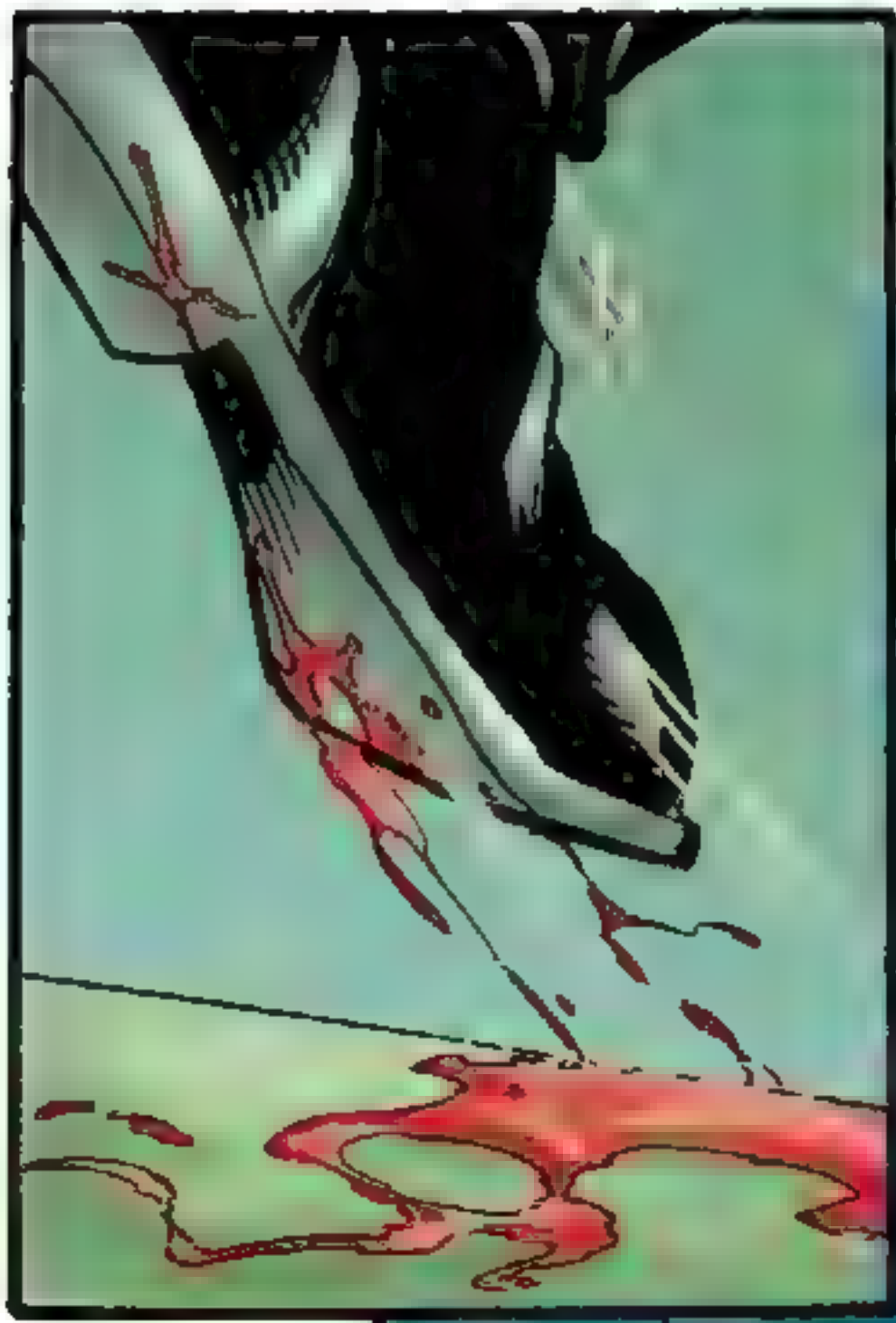








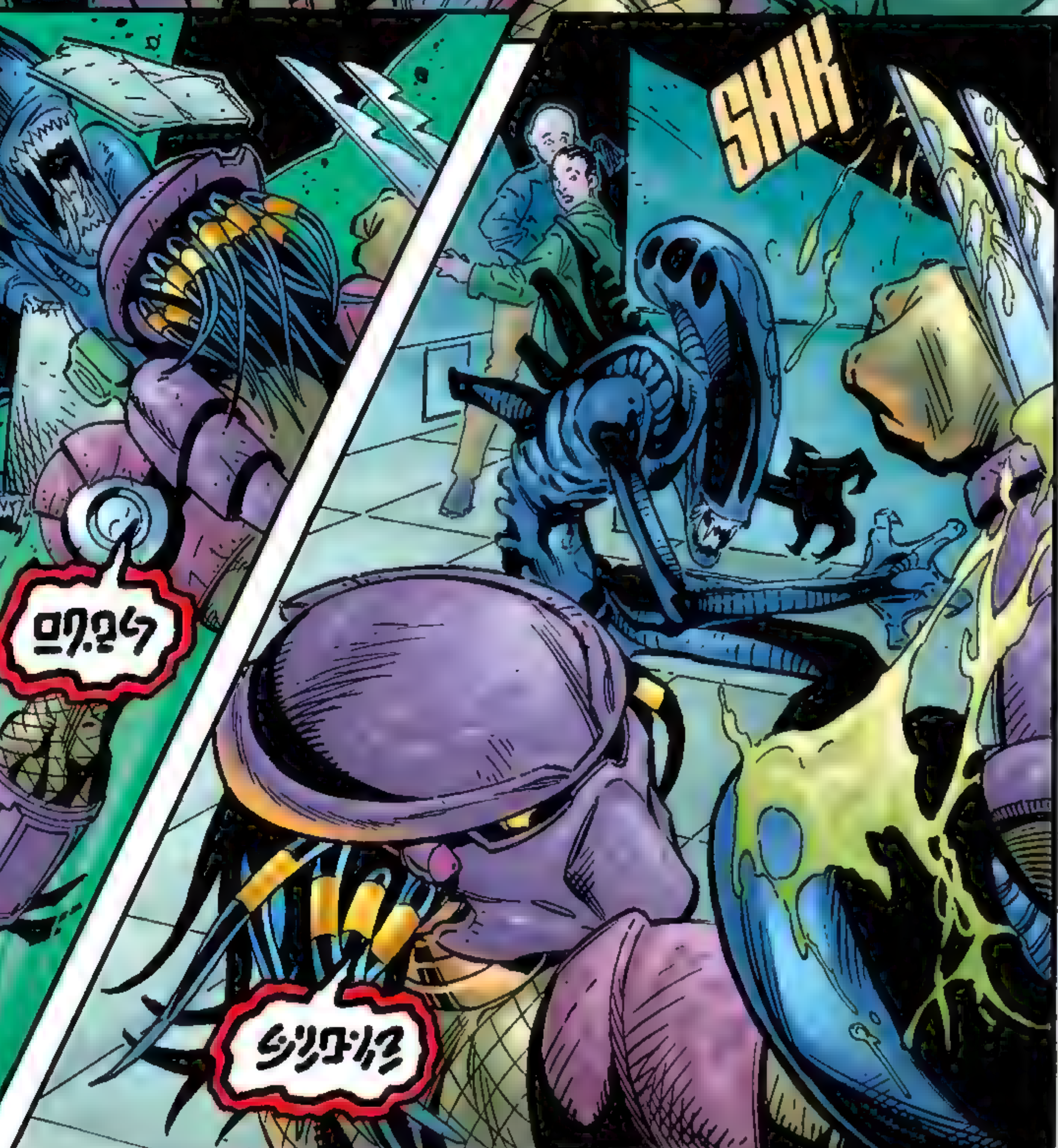
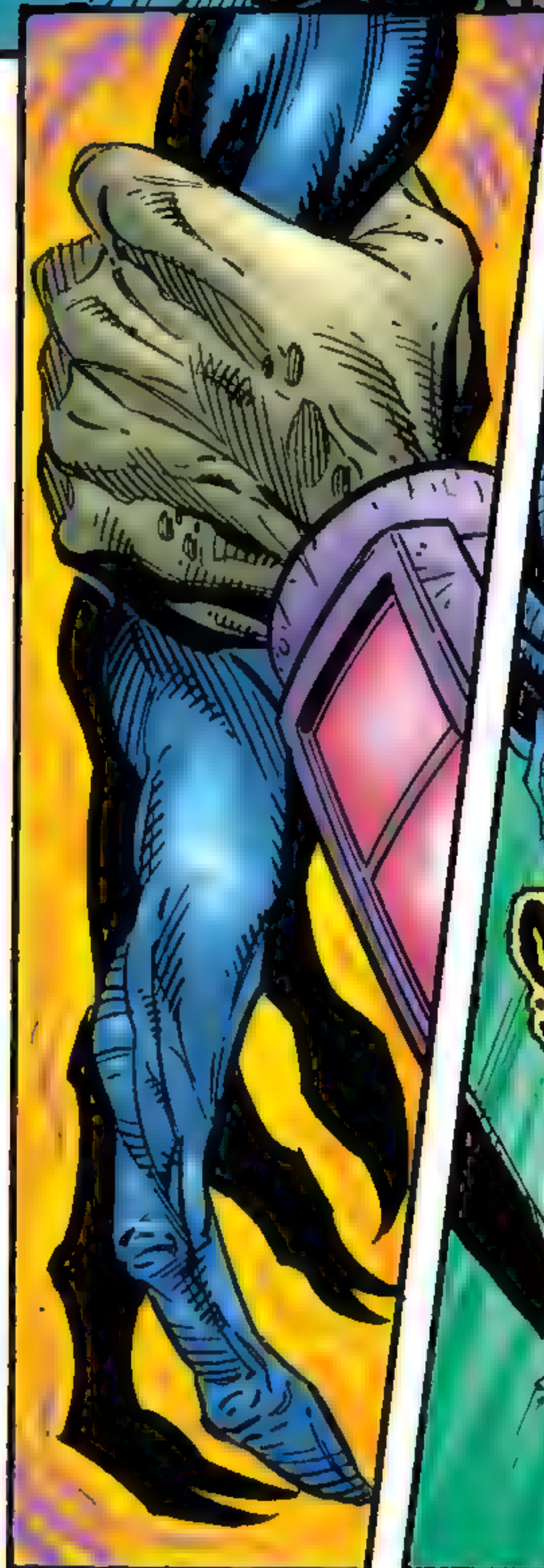


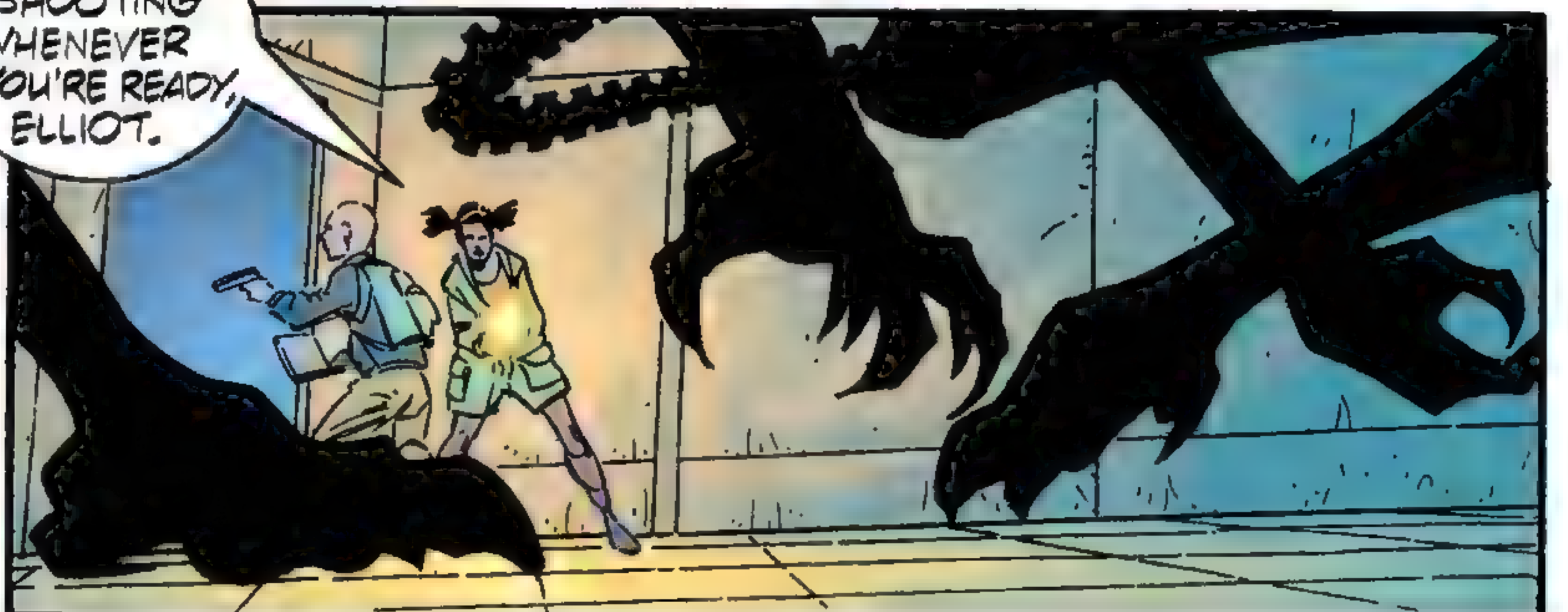
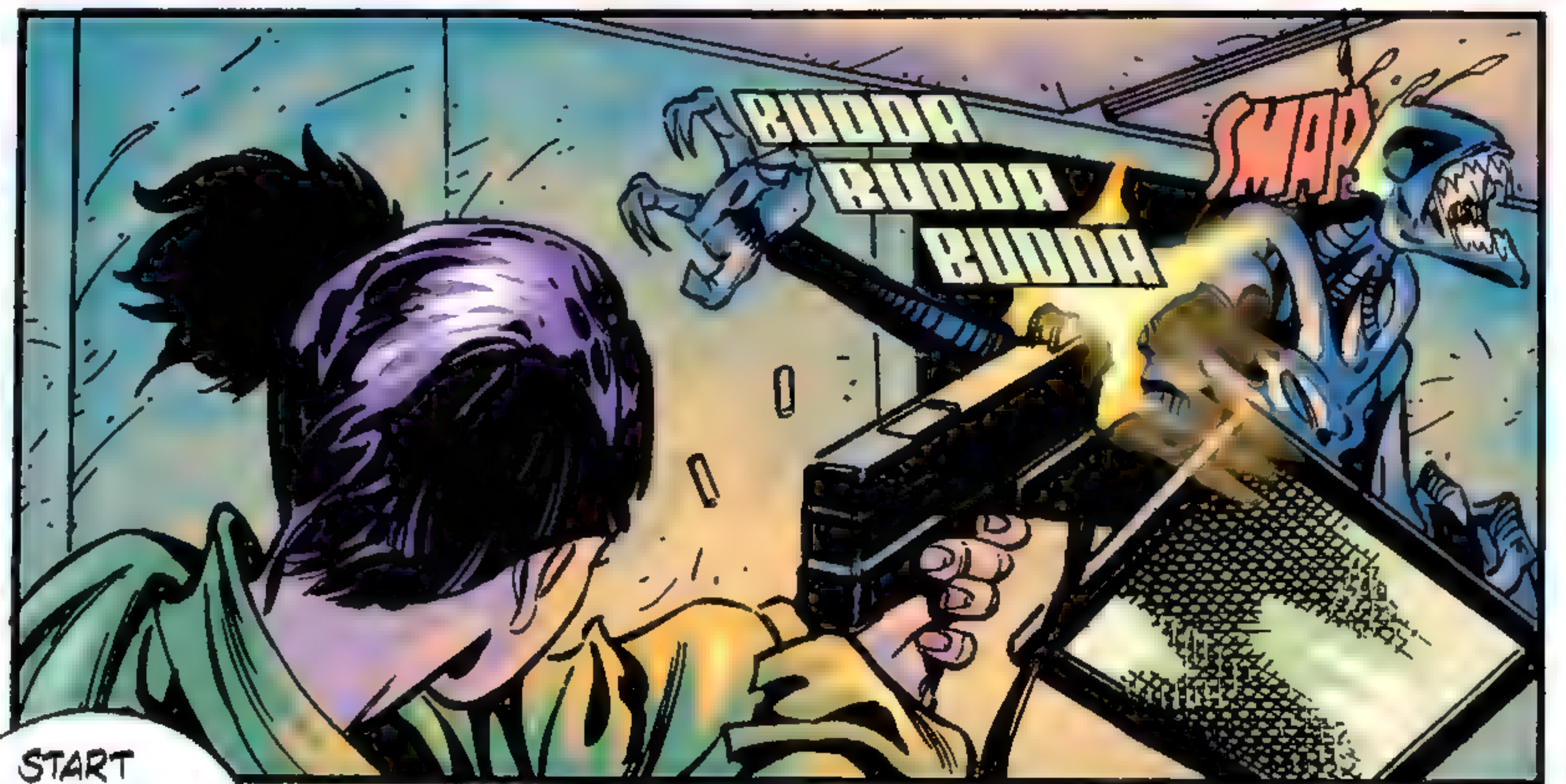
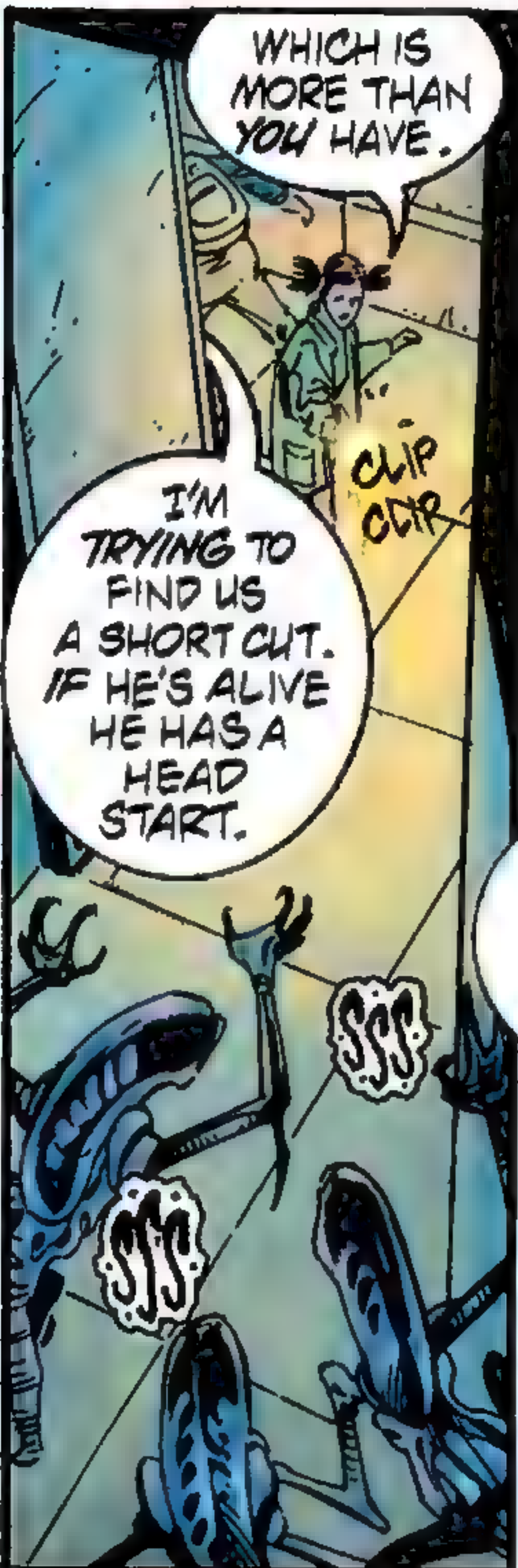
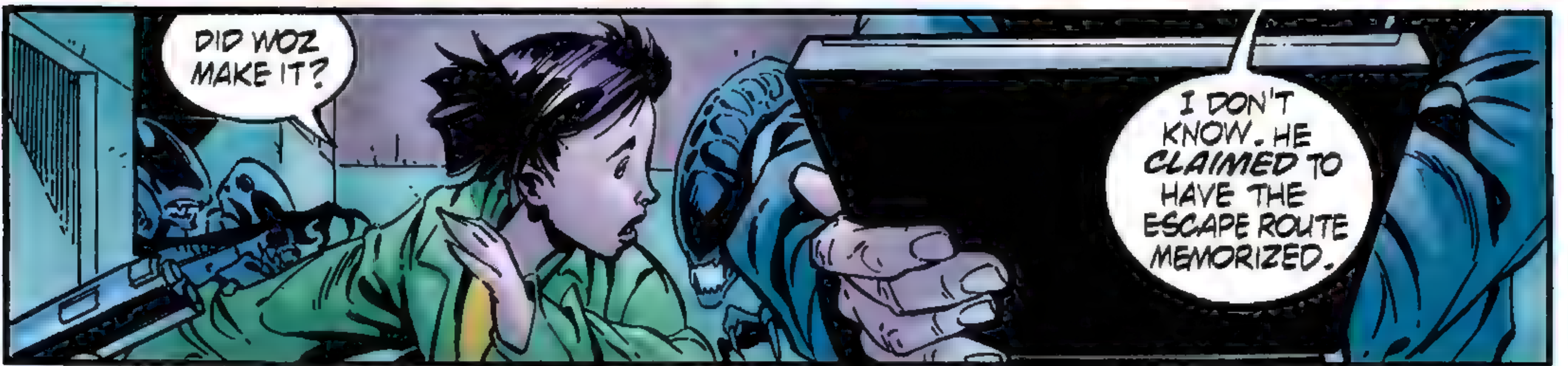


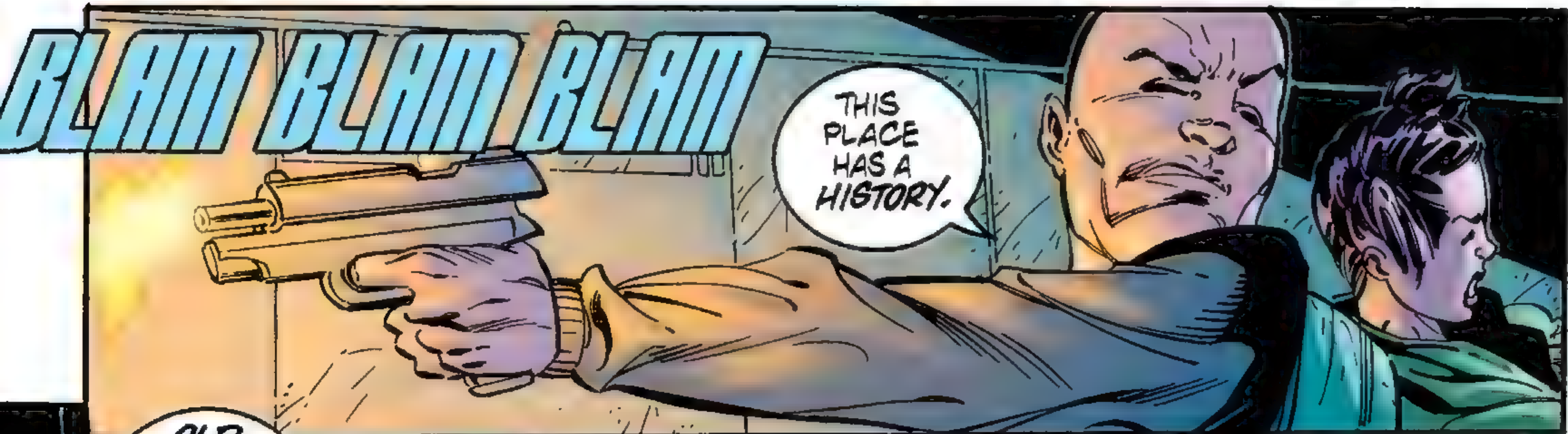


KRAAAGHH!

TROUBLE...







BLAM BLAM BLAM

THIS PLACE HAS A HISTORY.



OLD SECTIONS HAVE BEEN BOARDED OOF!



ALLOW ME, YOU BRUISE TOO EASY.

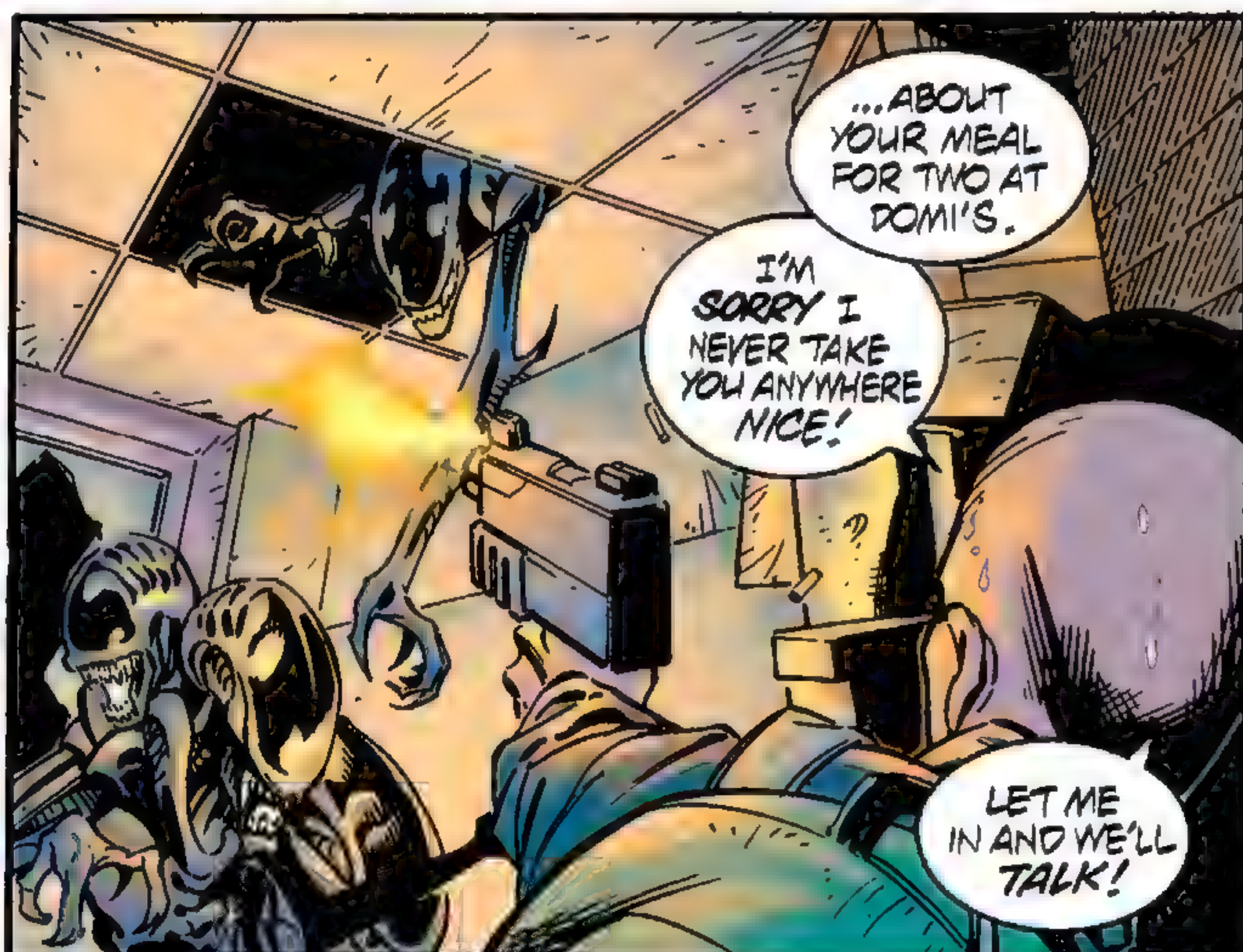
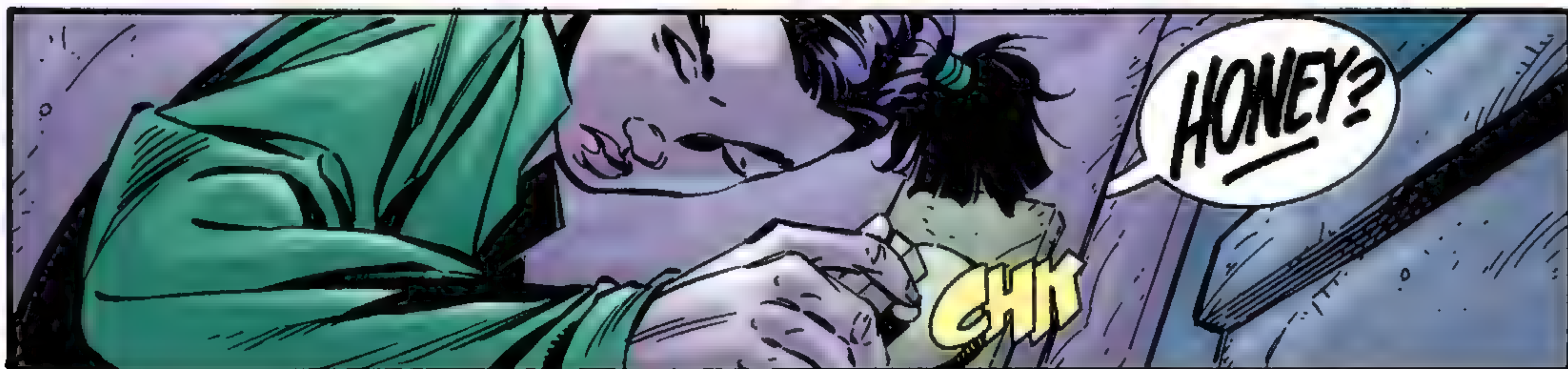
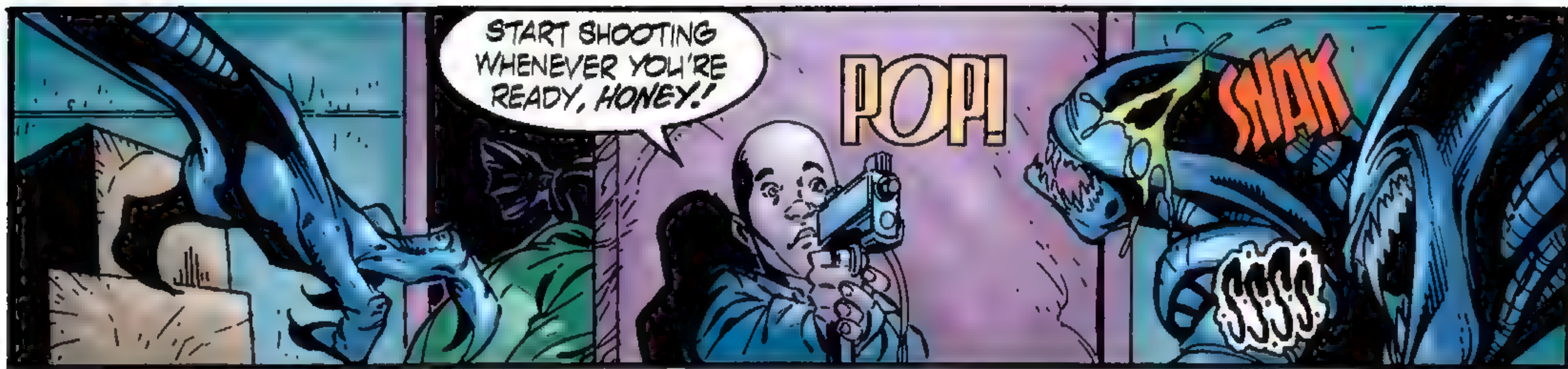


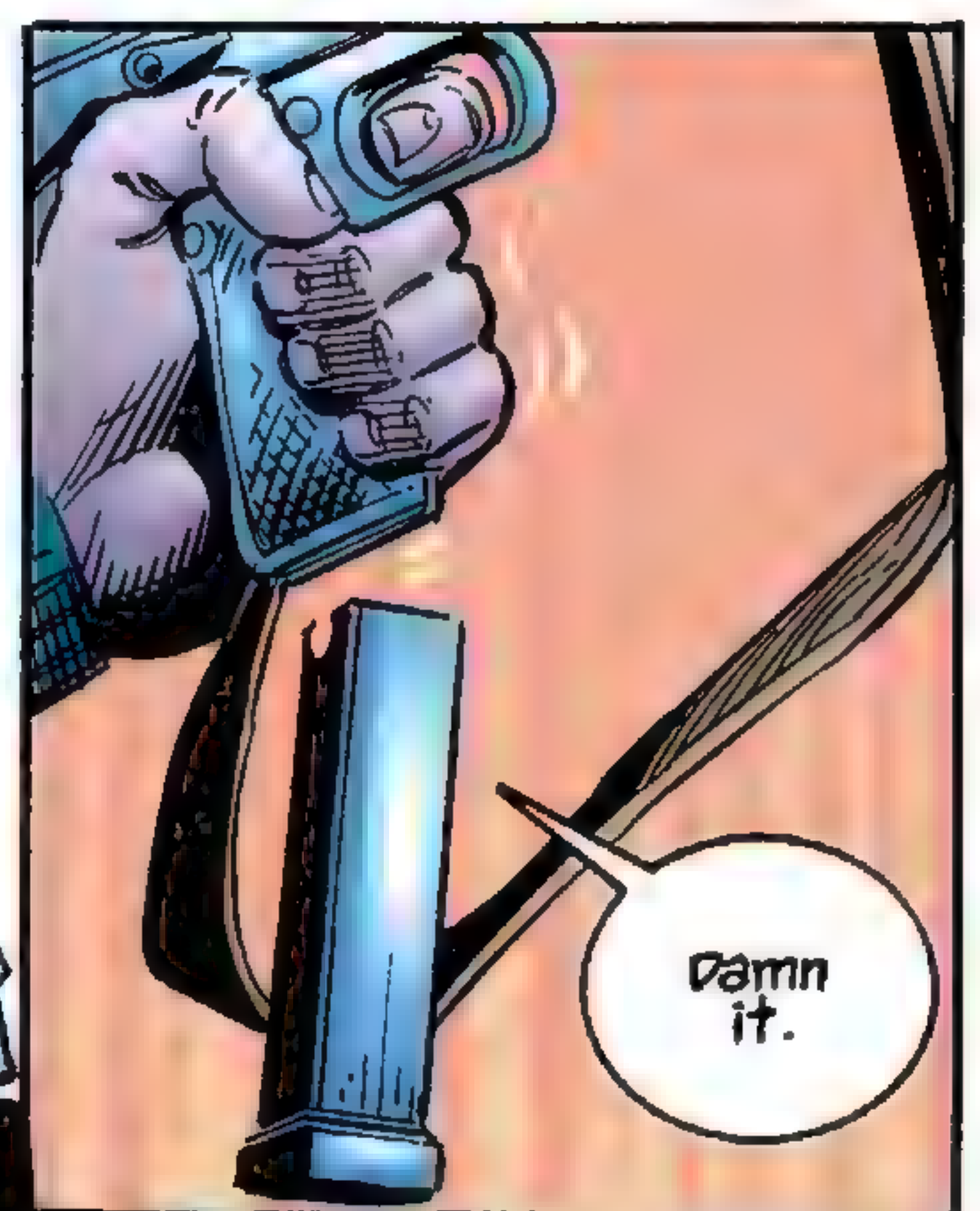
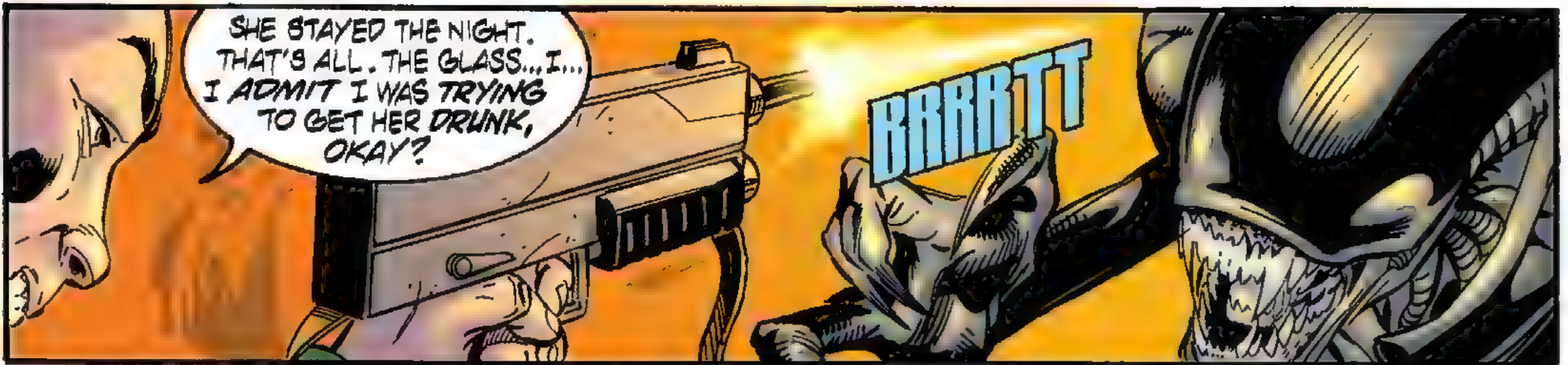
KROOOOF



STUPID STUPID ALIENS!

**SNAPPA
SNAPPA
SNAPPA
SNAPPA**

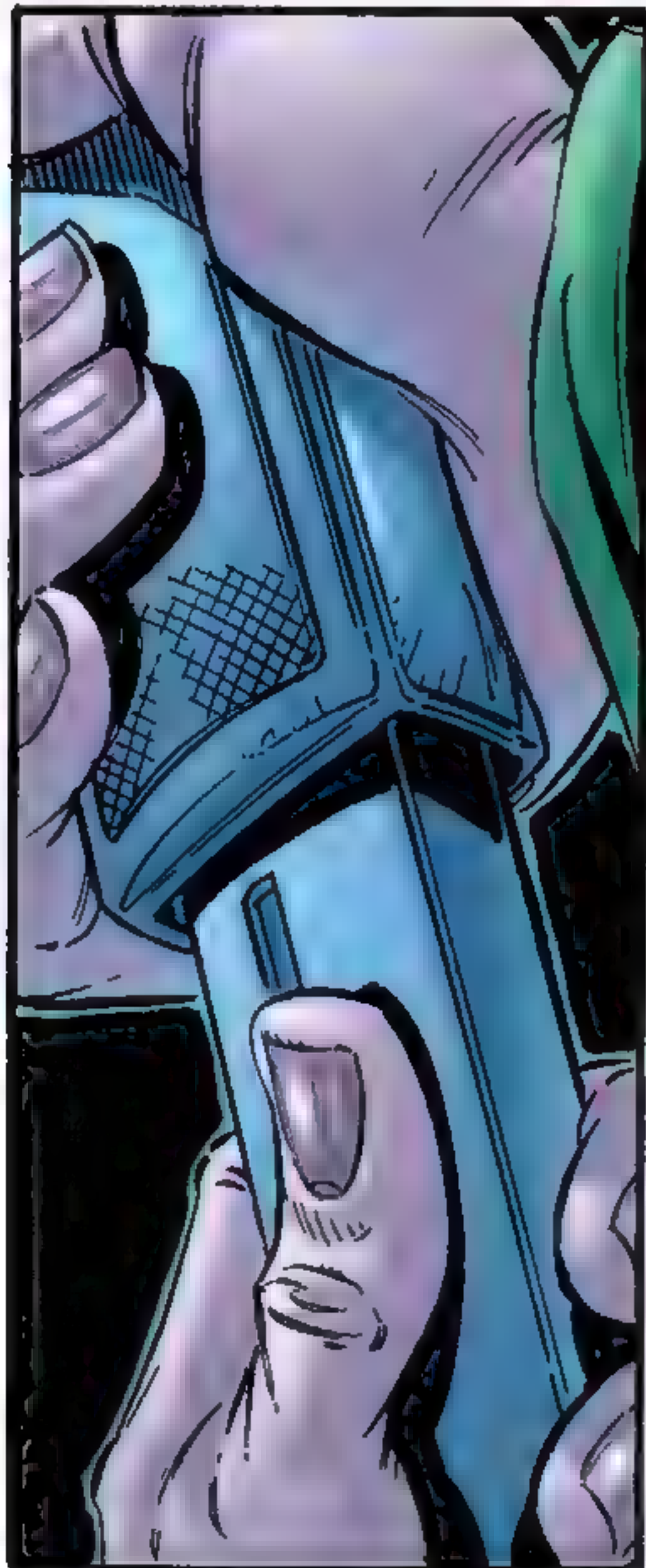






"WANTED TO HELP" ME?

AIEEEE!



WAAAA

BARRRRT

HATE TO THINK WHAT YOU'D DO TO HURT ME!



SLAM

I WAS TRYING TO GET YOU OUT OF JAIL.

~snif~ EVER HEARD OF THE FILE IN A CAKE METHOD? ~snif~



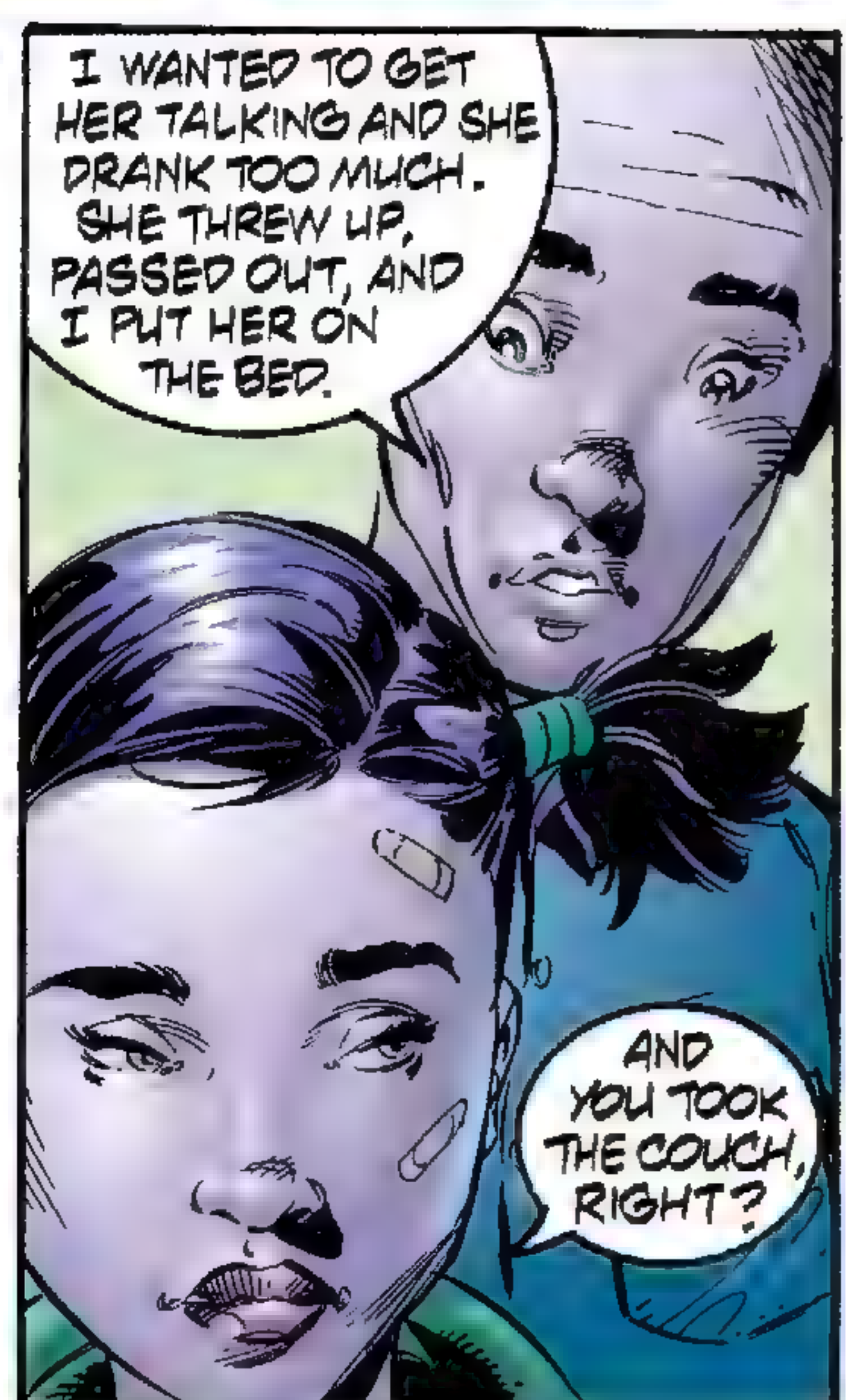
I FOUND OUT HILLARY WORKS IN THE NEXT DEPARTMENT OVER FROM ME. I WANTED TO QUESTION HER ABOUT THE NIGHT WE WERE BUSTED.

SHE WORKS FOR THE COMPANY?



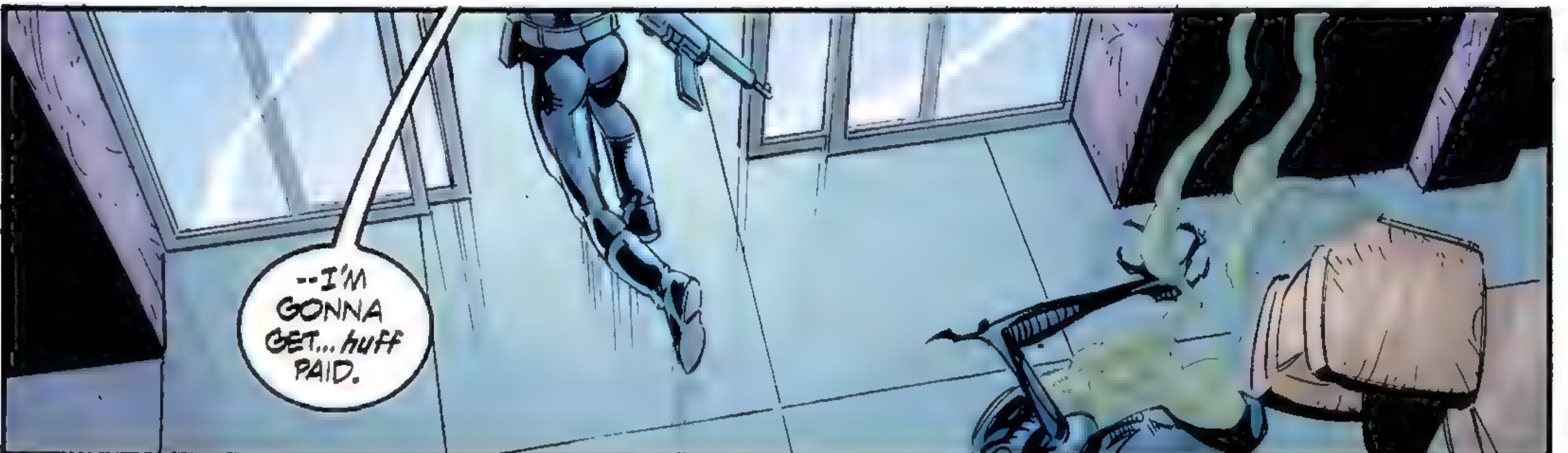
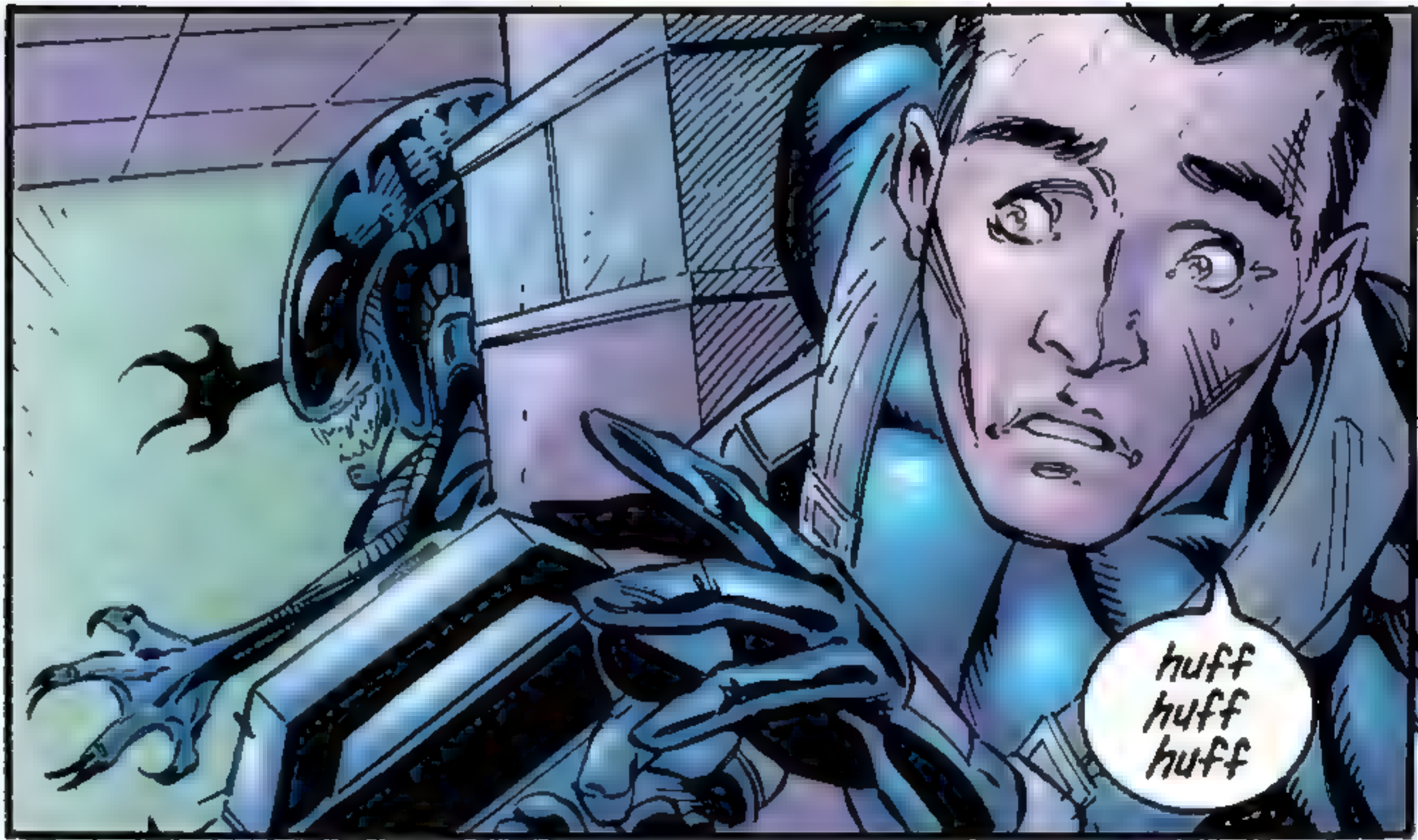
THE REST OF THE GANG WAS CAUGHT, YET YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE THEY ARRESTED. I WAS LOOKING FOR ANYTHING I COULD USE FOR YOUR NEXT APPEAL.

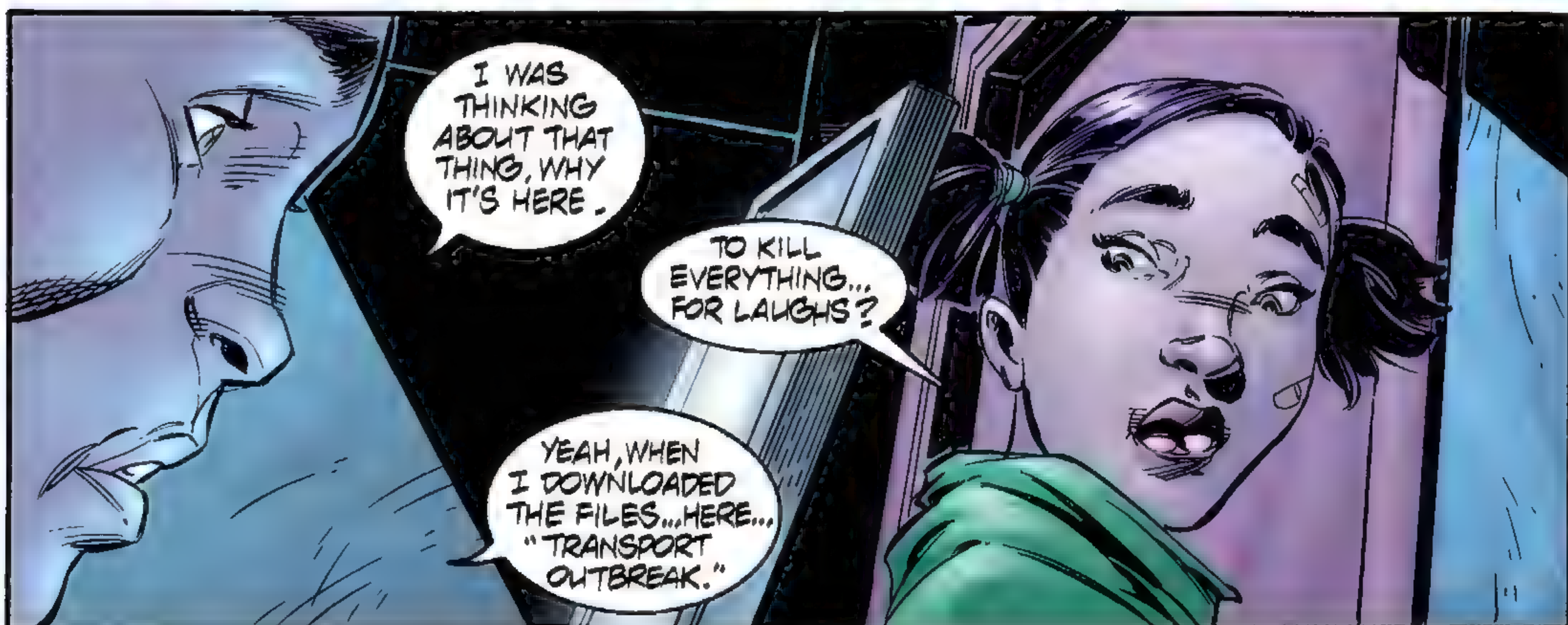
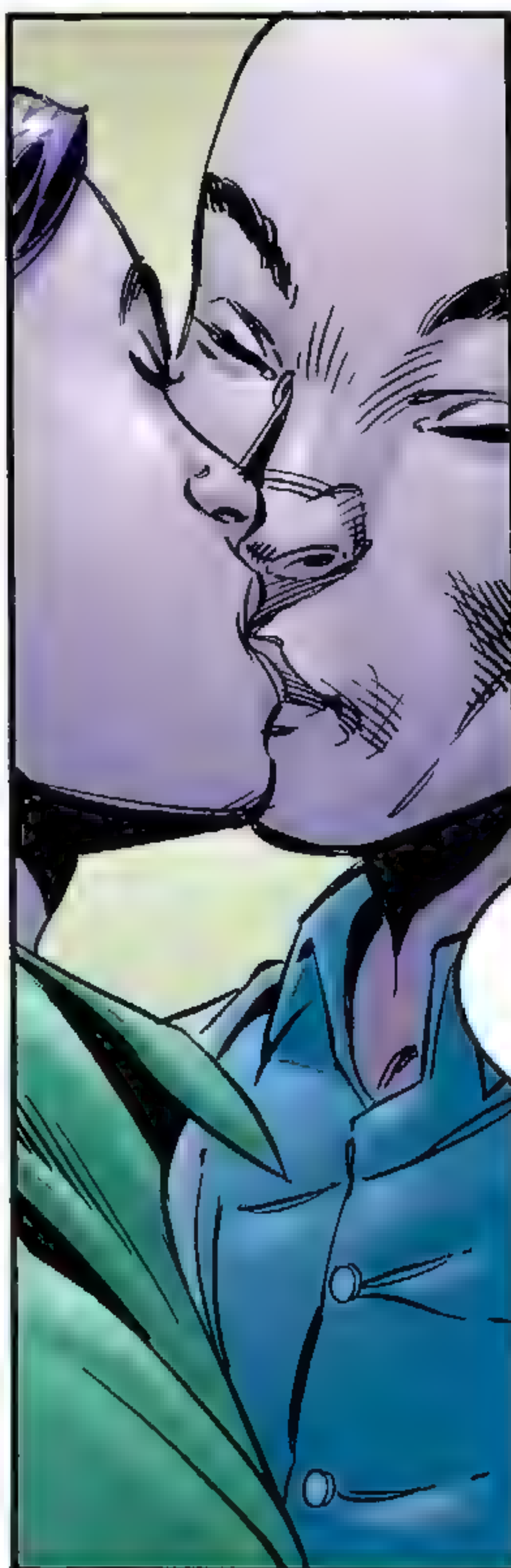
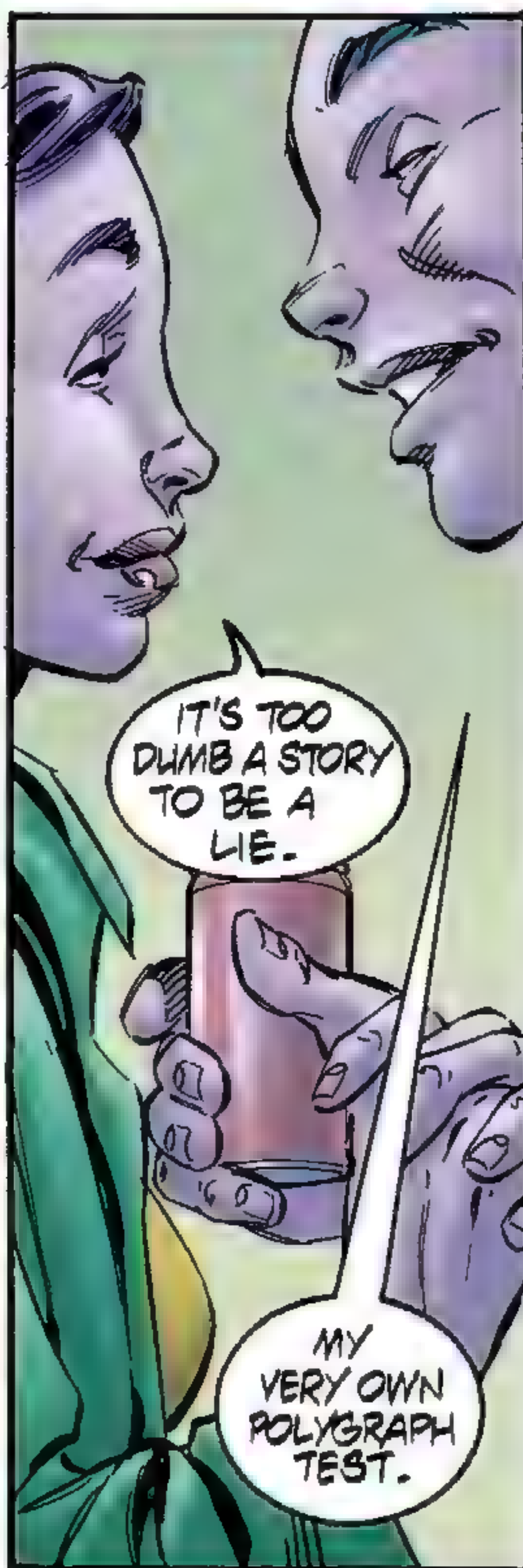
SHE SLEPT OVER?

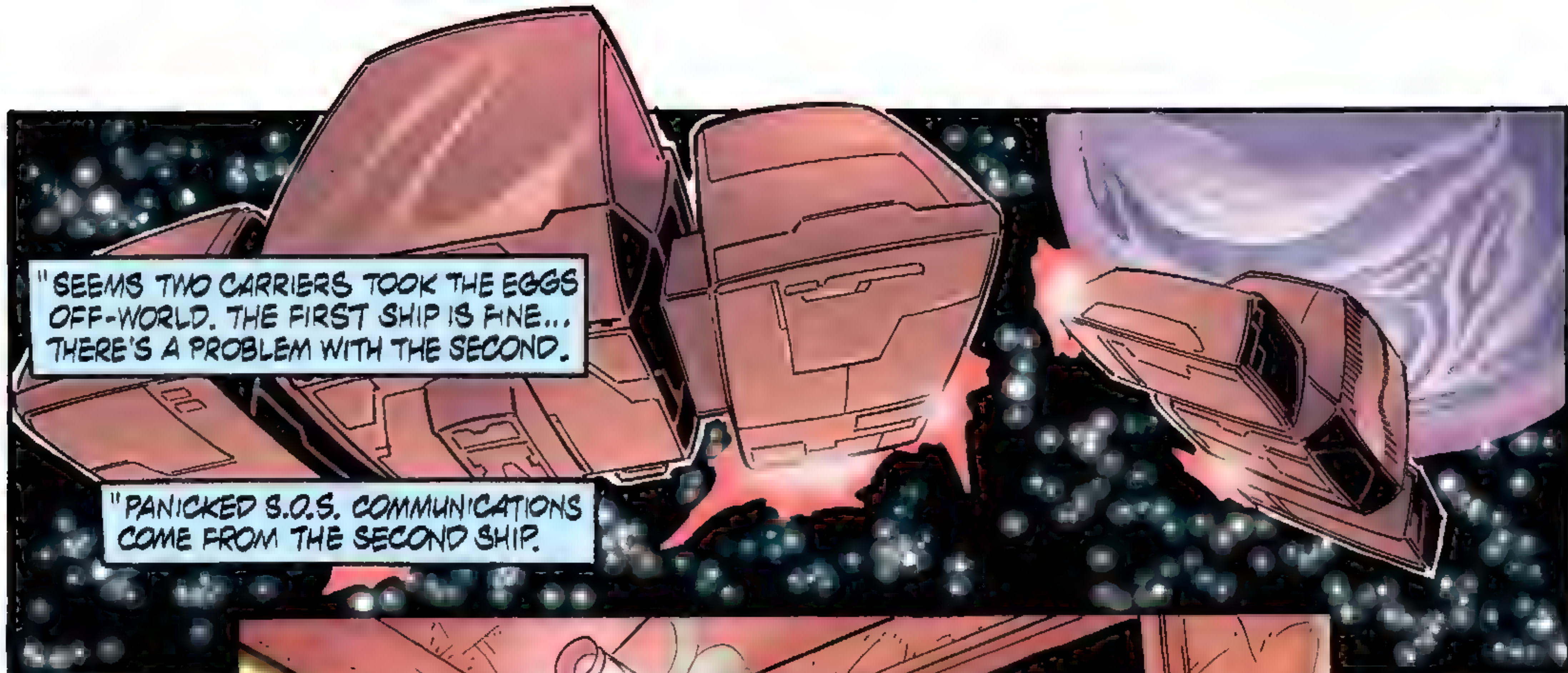


I WANTED TO GET HER TALKING AND SHE DRANK TOO MUCH. SHE THREW UP, PASSED OUT, AND I PUT HER ON THE BED.

AND YOU TOOK THE COUCH, RIGHT?







"SEEMS TWO CARRIERS TOOK THE EGGS OFF-WORLD. THE FIRST SHIP IS FINE... THERE'S A PROBLEM WITH THE SECOND."

"PANICKED S.O.S. COMMUNICATIONS COME FROM THE SECOND SHIP."



"THE CARGO HAS GOTTEN LOOSE. THEN THERE'S NOTHING... RADIO SILENCE."

"THE FIRST CARRIER IS ORDERED TO CONTINUE HOME AND LEAVE THE SECOND SHIP ALONE."



THE PREDATOR WAS SETTING UP SOME KIND OF HUNT!

HE FOLLOWED THE OTHER SHIP HERE TO CONTINUE THE FUN.



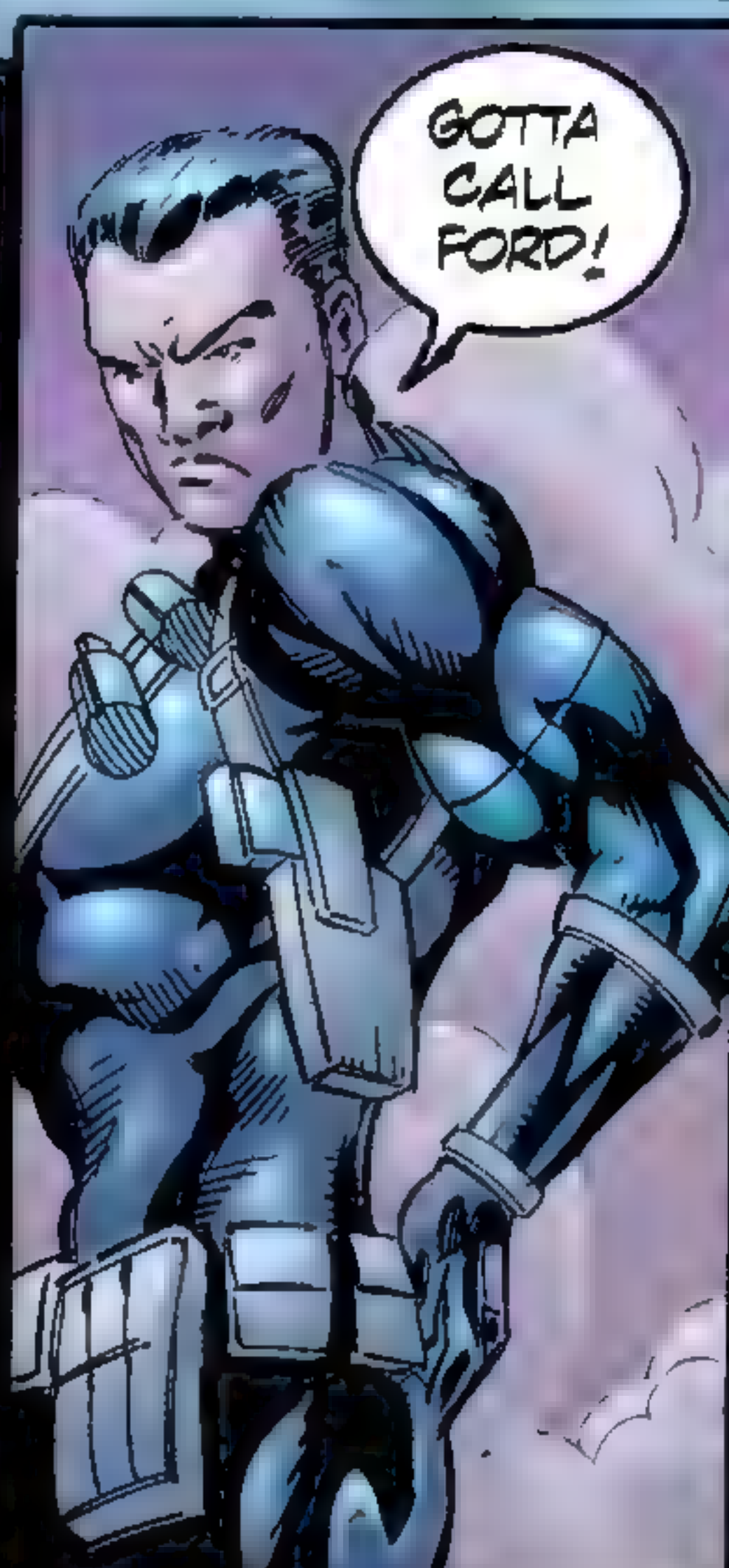
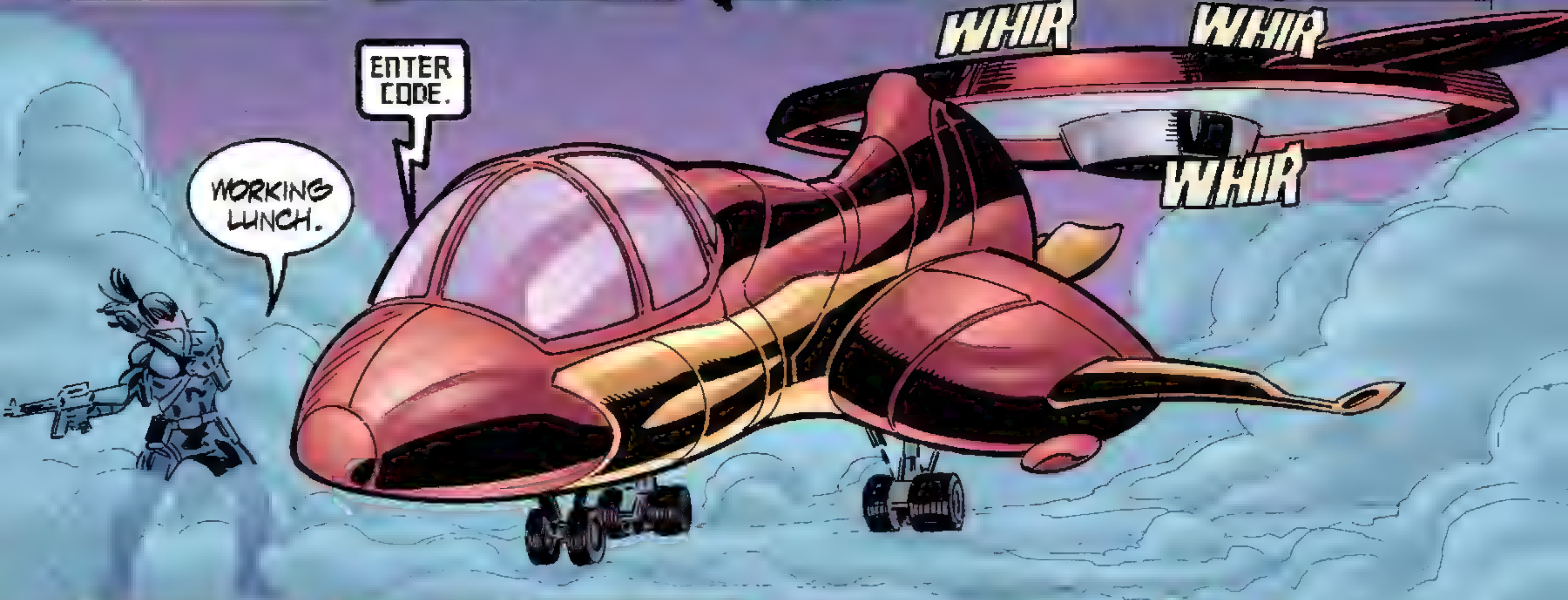
Wha--?

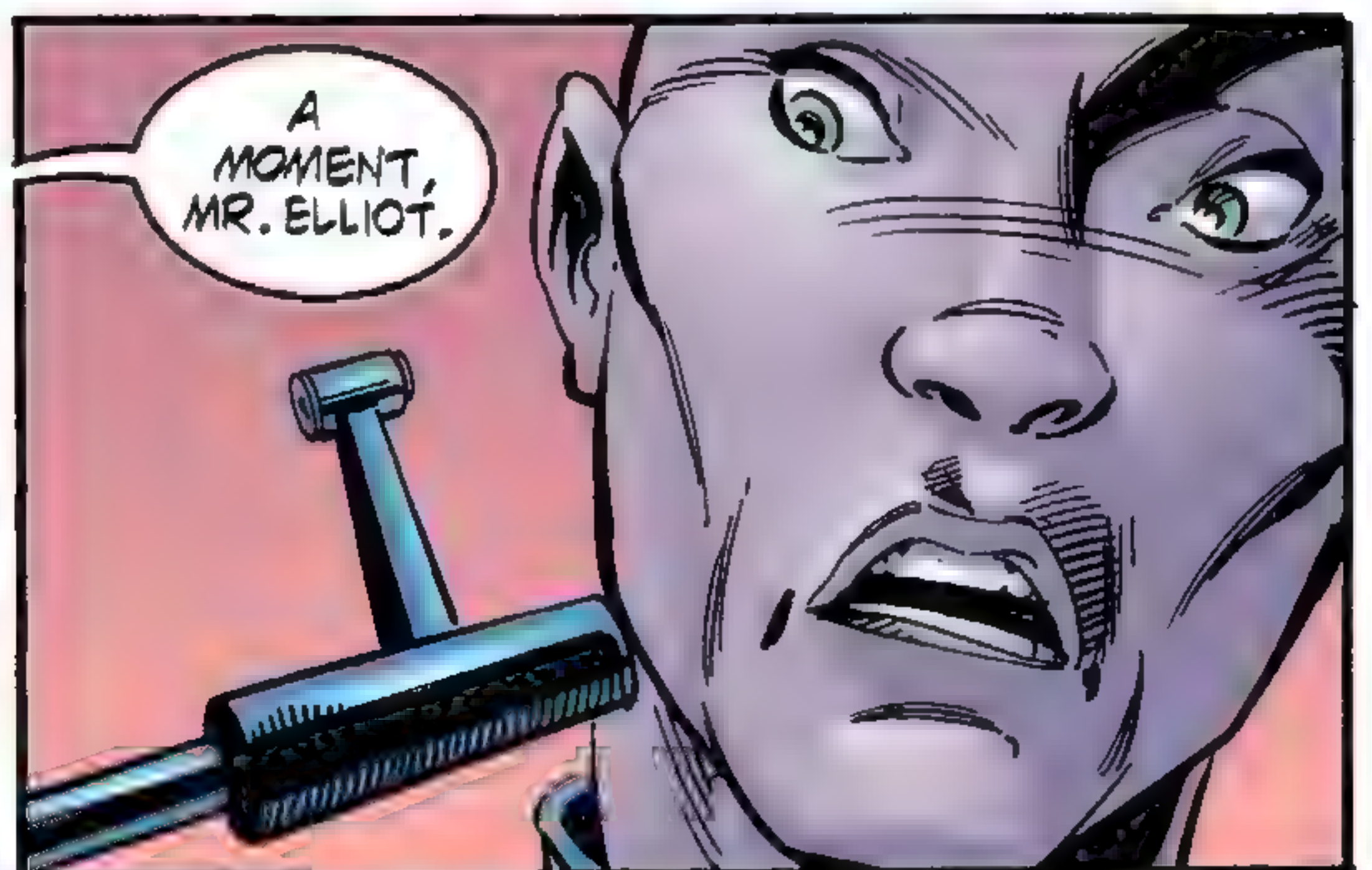
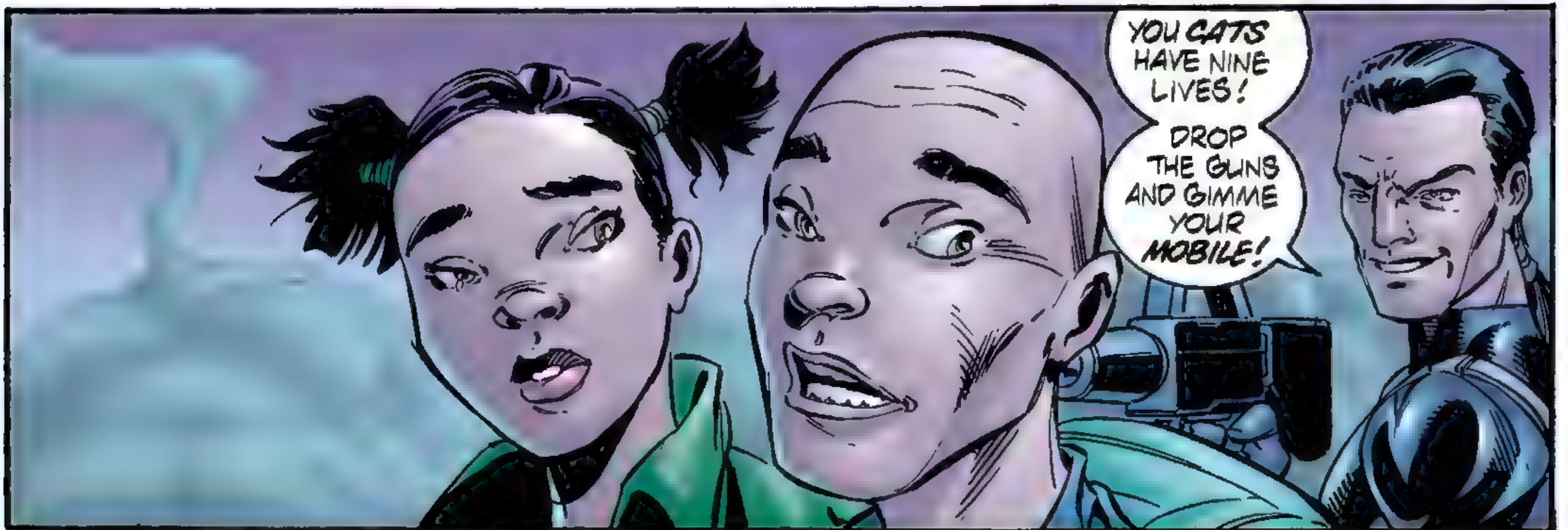
Huh?

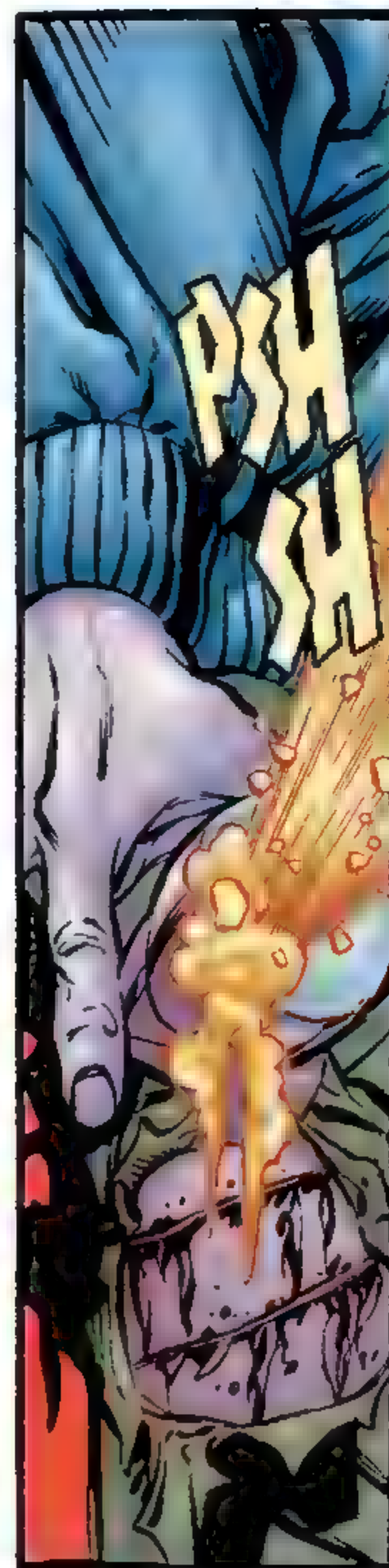


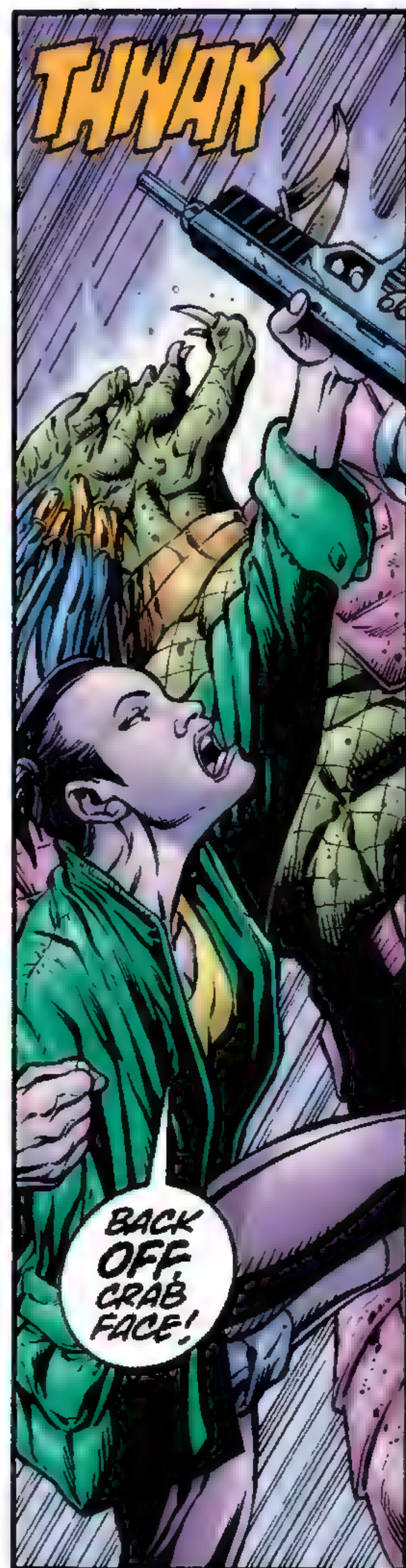
I THOUGHT YOU'D KILLED IT!

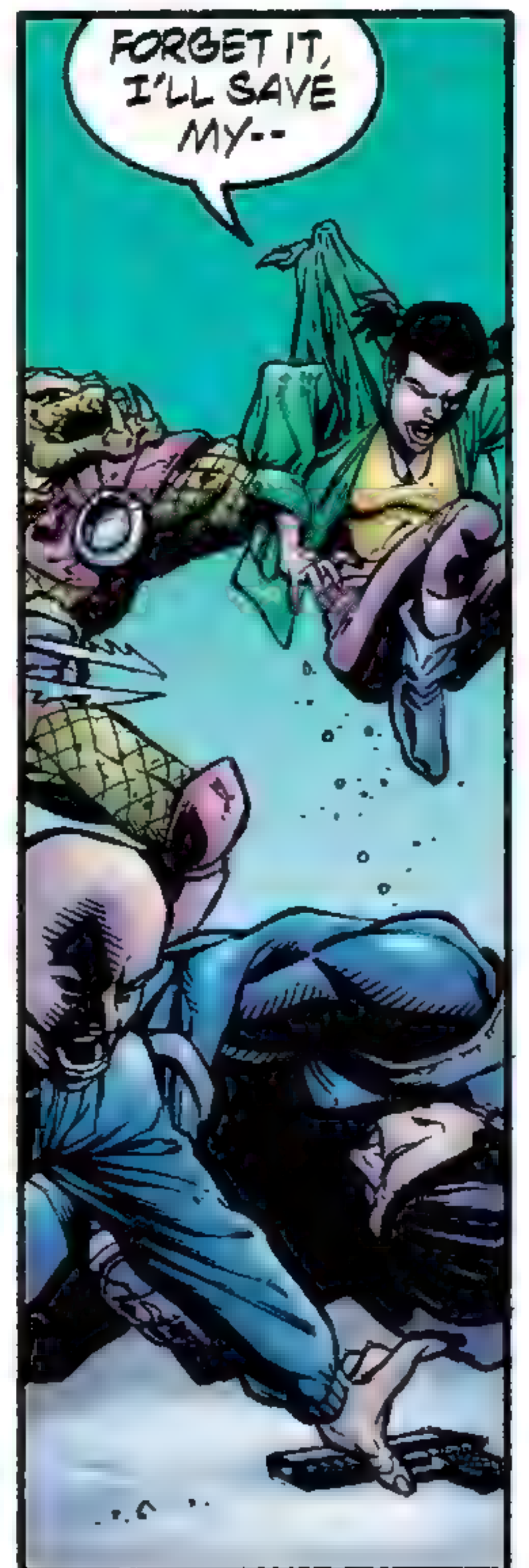
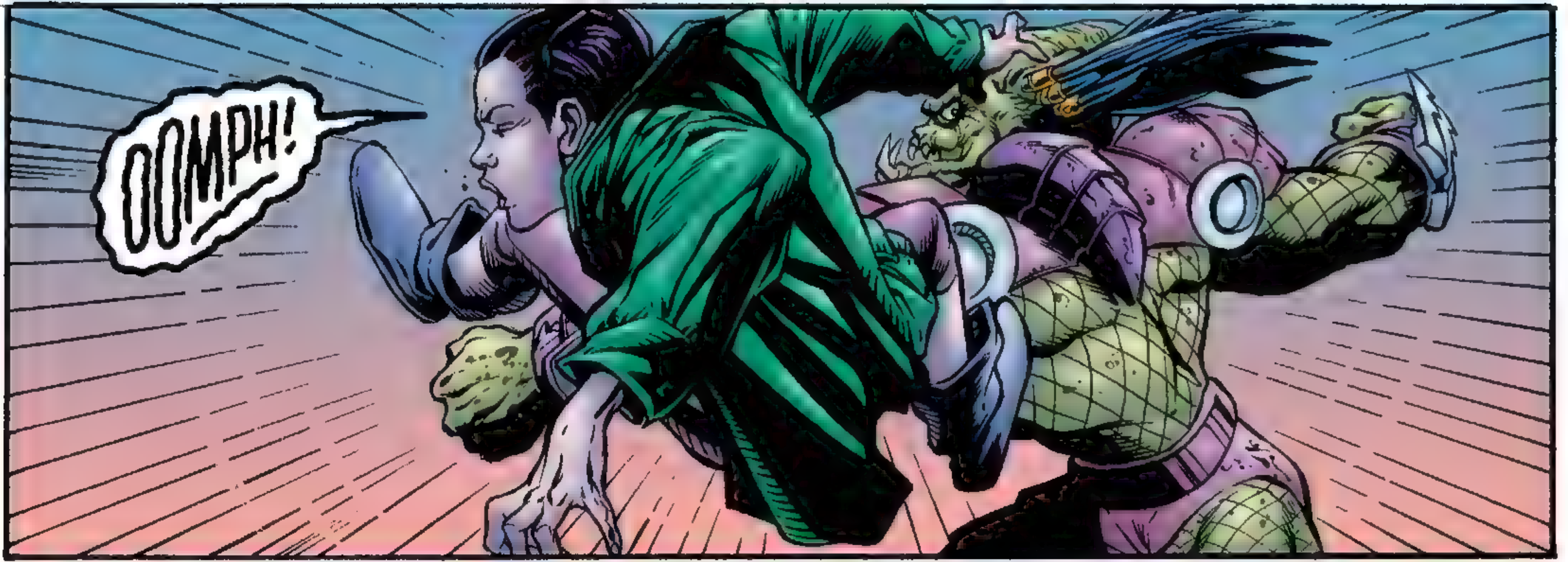
THING WON'T DIE!

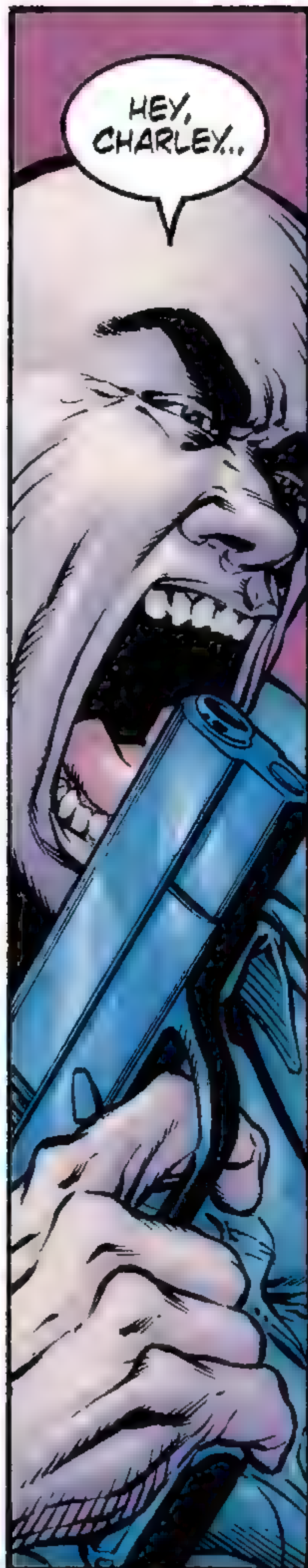


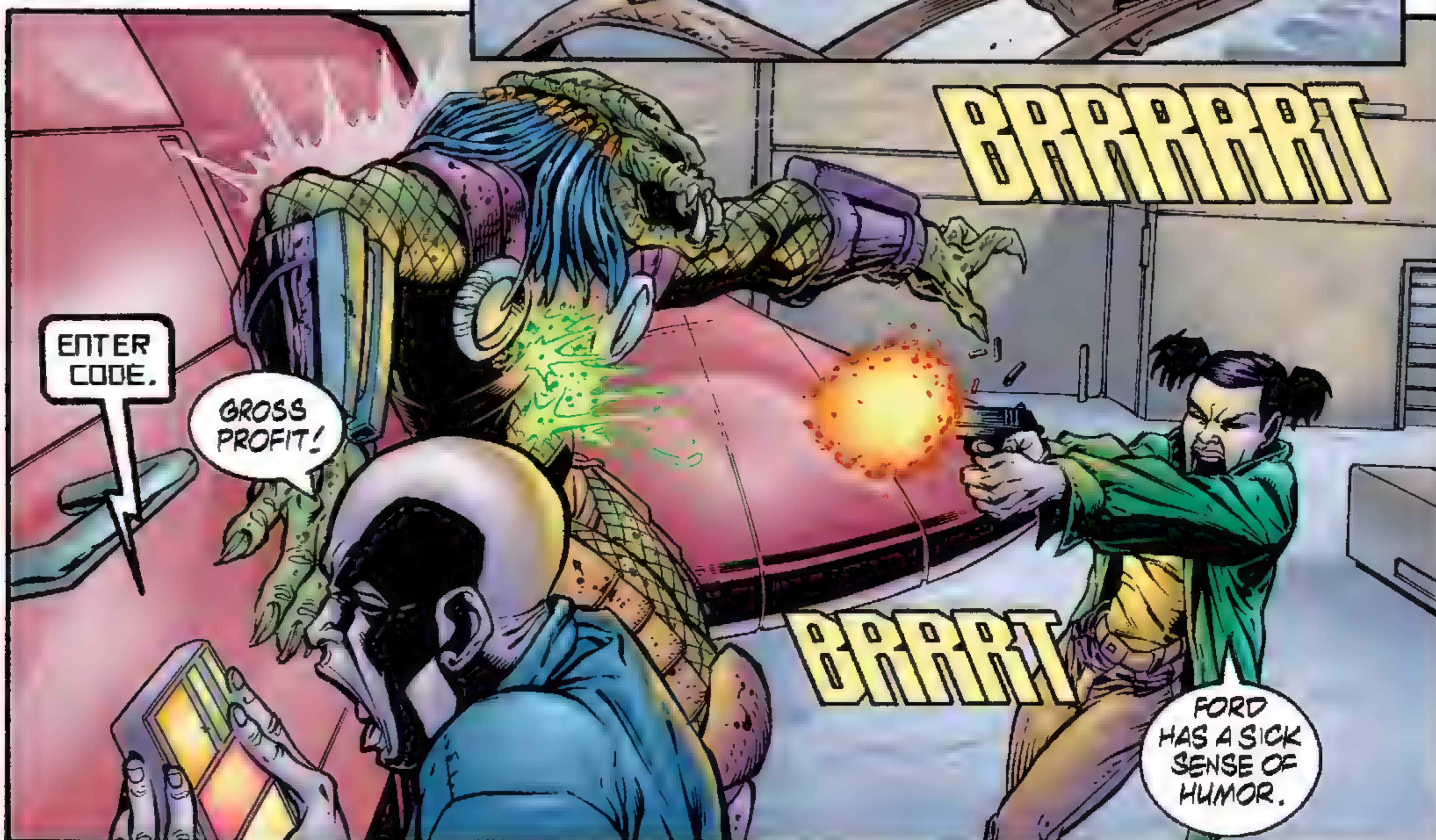
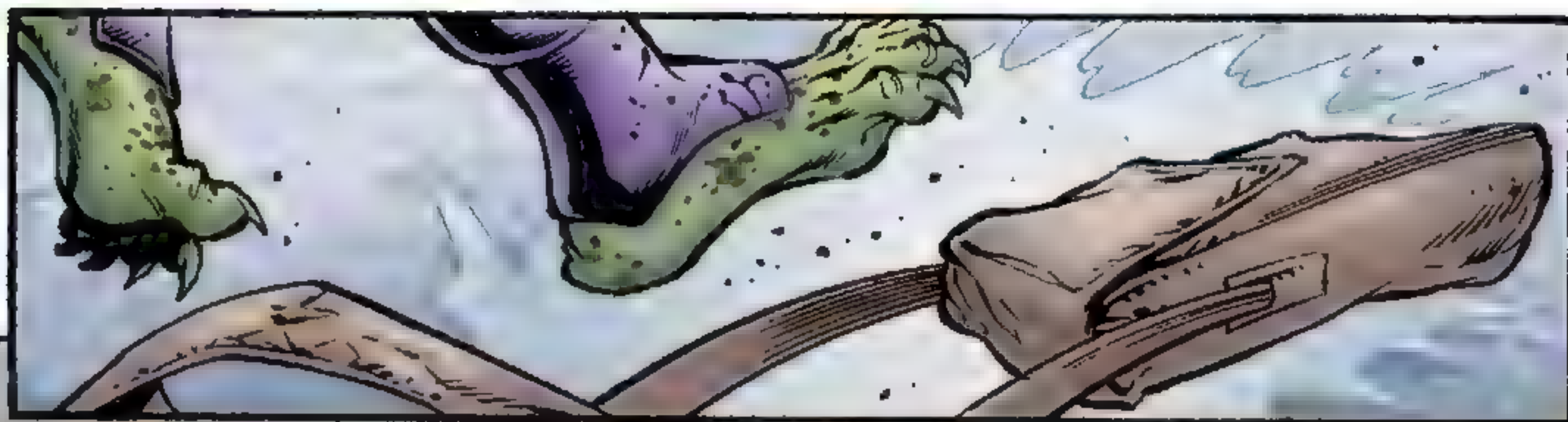


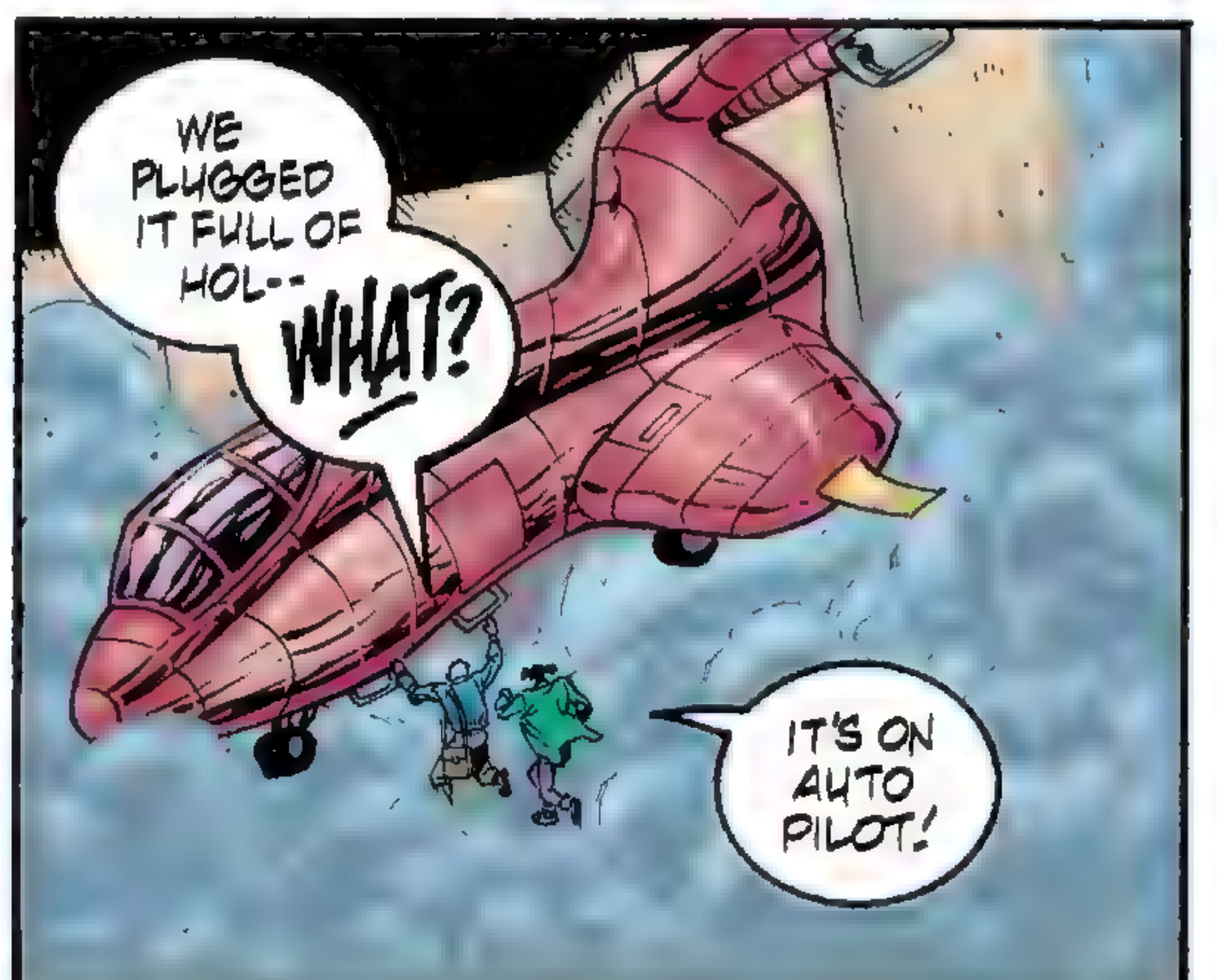
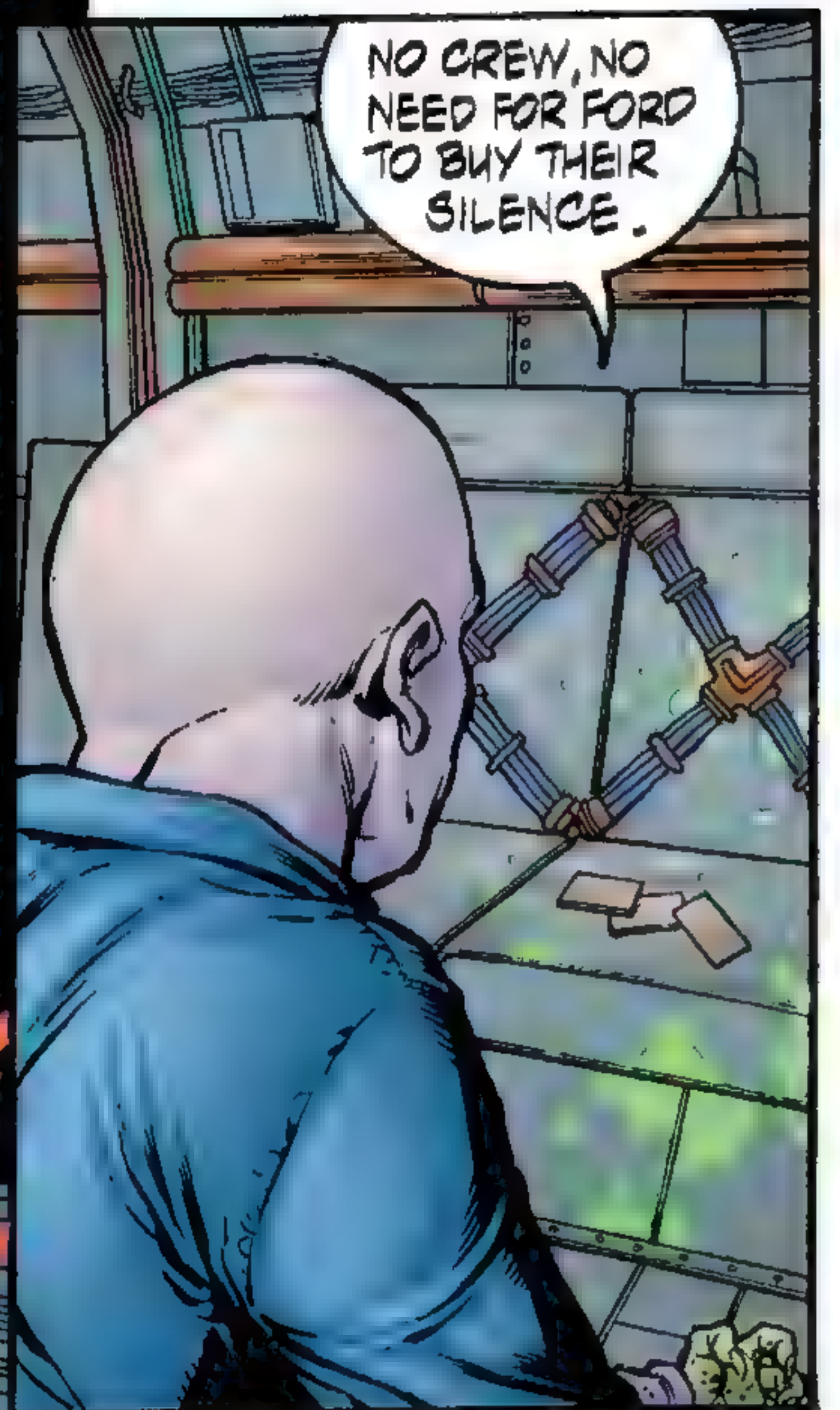


















NO. WE
WERE THERE
TO GET THE
EGGS... AND
BE FED TO
THEM.



ENOUGH
CASH FOR
TICKETS TO
AN EXOTIC
LOCATION?

MAY
I...?



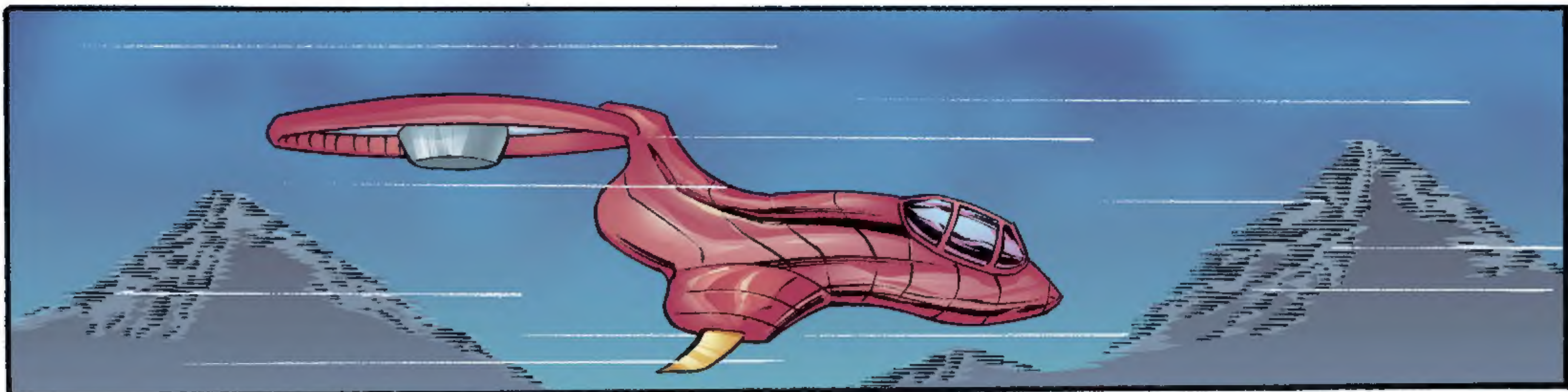
OOF!
GIMME SOME
HELP HERE,
MS. SAKADA.

SHALL
WE TALK
ABOUT NAMES
LATER?



OH,
YOU DON'T
WANT MY
NAME?

IT'S NOT
THAT... I
JUST WANT
TO KEEP
MINE!



EPILOGUE

I'M SURE
YOU'LL FIND
EVERYTHING TO
YOUR
LIKING...

RIGHT
THIS
WAY...

OH, SIR!
I DIDN'T
EXPECT--

IF
THERE'S
ANYTHING
I CAN
DO--!

THAT'LL
BE ALL. I'M
SURE I CAN MAKE
IT THROUGH THE
LATE MS. FORD'S
FILES ALL BY
MYSELF.

M. FORD

MMPF!

IT'S ALL
YOURS,
PAL!

YES...
ALL
MINE!

W. SHAW

end?



ALIENSTM vs. PREDATORTM OMNIBUS VOLUME 2

Mankind's most lethal adversaries battle for supremacy, and whoever wins—we lose. In a skyliner high above the Alien-contaminated Earth, Caryn Delacroix can't sleep. Terrifying images of pursuit, disfigurement, and bloody death have invaded her peaceful dreams in her safe and privileged world. But they're only nightmares . . . or are they? The beautiful trophy-consort of corporate magnate Lucien Delacroix soon discovers that nightmares *do* come true and there are fates worse than death—when a Predator comes to call.

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